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'Great evil in our society' attacked

Abortion will be poll issue, says Hume

By RUTH GLEDHILL AND ANDREW PIERCE

CARDINAL BASIL HUME will tomorrow put abortion firmly on the election agenda when he describes it as a "great evil" in his strongest condemnation so far on the issue.

The intervention by the spiritual leader of the 4.4 million Roman Catholics in England and Wales will encourage the further mobilisation of anti-abortion supporters, who have pledged to turn it into a vital election issue.

Cardinal Hume, in an interview to be broadcast tomorrow, defends the right of church leaders to engage in politics. He says that they are neglecting their God-given responsibility if they fail to do so. In the interview for GMTV's *Sunday*, he says: "There are some things which are clearly good. There are some things which are clearly evil."

One example of evil was abortion. "There's no way in which the church will change its attitude towards that. And I think in future generations we'll be pleased that somebody has stood very firm on that issue. I am quite convinced that abortion is a great evil in our society and really unworthy of a civilised society."

Up to 50 MPs may face a challenge from anti-abortionists in next year's general election. The Pro-Life Alliance,



Hume: church will not change its attitude

which will be entitled to one party political broadcast, last night welcomed the cardinal's comments. The organisation, which has secured funding to open offices in London, the Midlands and Scotland, has picked more than a dozen candidates, including one Muslim.

Professor Jack Scarisbrick, the national chairman of Life, the anti-abortion charity, which is backing the election effort, said: "The support of Cardinal Hume will give a flying start to our general election campaign. It will help to ensure that for the first time, as in the United States, a person's view on abortion is an election issue and could cost him or her their seat."

The comments from Cardinal Hume will revive charges of hypocrisy against Tony

Blair, the Labour leader, who has never voted against abortion in the Commons but professes his personal opposition to it.

Mr Blair's stance was singled out for criticism by Cardinal Thomas Winning, the leader of the Roman Catholic Church in Scotland, who accused him of "washing his hands" of abortion. Last year there were 170,000 abortions in Britain down from a peak of almost 200,000 in 1990.

Mr Blair's aides fear that he is becoming the target of an American-style campaign waged by single-issue zealots, who have latched on to Cardinal Winning's criticism. John Major has voted against abortion in the past and the Tory Government reduced the limit on which abortions can be obtained from 28 to 24 weeks unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Cardinal Hume is speaking out only weeks after the Catholic bishops issued their document, *The Common Good*, which argued that voters could look favourably on a candidate whose general platform was in line with Catholic social teaching even if they differed with it on a single issue. It was condemned by anti-abortion groups and seen as pro-Labour. Cardinal Hume said he felt moved to speak after 3,000 frozen embryos were destroyed in

Continued on page 2, col 1



Crowds of shoppers pack Oxford Street yesterday as the post-Christmas sales began. Banks, stores and travel firms reported record business.

Feel-good factor returns with the sales

By EMMA WILKINS

THE return of consumer confidence was confirmed yesterday as department stores and shopping centres reported a record start to the post-Christmas sales.

There was further good news when the Nationwide Building Society said 900,000 households had been freed from negative equity thanks to rising prices in 1996. There are now 800,000 with negative equity, down from 1.7 million

at the end of 1995. It expects house prices, which increased by 8.5 per cent nationally in 1996, to rise by a further 7 per cent in 1997. Prices in Greater London and the South East have risen 10 per cent in the past 12 months.

Yesterday, Selfridges in London said its sales were up between 10-15 per cent on the same day last year. In Sheffield, the Meadowhall Shopping Centre was preparing for a record 150,000 customers. Despite snow in much of

Britain, shoppers were queuing. Many said they wanted to buy designer clothes as store managers reported a return to the mid-1980s "love of the label" phenomenon.

One of the most popular bargains this year is package holidays, according to travel agents and tour operators. Bookings are up 30 per cent on last year, with bargains of up to 25 per cent off.

The scale of the return of confidence was apparent from record amounts of money

withdrawn from cashpoint machines over the holidays.

NatWest said that on December 24, a record £72.5 million was withdrawn — a third up on last year. A total of 2.7 million credit and debit card authorisations were recorded on Christmas Eve — the equivalent of 80 a second.

Vitorio Radice, the managing director of Selfridges, said: "In the first four hours we served 12,000 customers and there were 800 in the queue when the doors opened."

"Consumer confidence is coming back because everyone feels good at the moment. The economy is going well, people have got secure jobs and they are feeling like spending money."

In Newcastle upon Tyne, one family began queuing for the sales on Christmas Eve. Malcolm Kidd, 38, took it in turns with his cousin to sit outside Barker & Stonehouse's department store to buy a £2,000 three-piece suite reduced to £99.

Yachtsman tells of hunt for friend

The British yachtsman who rescued a fellow competitor in a round-the-world race during terrible storms has spoken of his relief at finding him alive.

Pete Goss sailed more than 150 miles off his course to find Raphael Dineen, who was fighting hypothermia after sinking in his life raft for 36 hours. Page 3

£2.6m payoffs in electricity deal

Directors of Northern Electric will share almost £2.6 million in payoffs and options after the company's £782 million takeover by CE Electric of America. The payments will increase to more than £2.25 million the windfall due to utility chiefs after successful takeover bids. Page 23

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Kremlin cleaning lady dishes the dirt on Russia's leaders

FROM RICHARD BEESTON IN MOSCOW

THE most experienced mover along the Kremlin's treacherous corridors of power has broken her silence after 60 years to reveal what many Russians had long suspected — that despots and democrats are not that different once in office.

According to Polina Malinkina, who has been a cleaner at the Kremlin since 1937, the country's political elite can be easily divided into two groups — those who wipe their feet and those who do not.

After years of dutiful service shovelling snow, emptying bins and cleaning floors the wily 80-year-old has concluded that, by and large, the Kremlin's leaders are "not a bad bunch" and that Stalin was one of her favourite bosses.

"He was so small and so kind," she told the *Komsomolskaya Pravda*

newspaper. "I used to weed the flower beds. He would come out and sit on the steps to smoke a pipe. The security people would try to shoo me away, but Stalin would say 'do not bother Polina, let her get on with her weeding'."

"He looked at me in such a kind way. Sometimes there were tears in his eyes. He cared about the common people. When I hear gossip about the repressions, all I can say is that I did not see anything, and that is the truth," she said. Mrs Malinkina said that her only disappointment with the Soviet dictator was because of the desecration of cathedrals.

As for Stalin's notorious advisers, she said that Vyacheslav Molotov, the foreign minister who concluded the secret pact with Hitler, was by far the tidiest and that the only things she had to clear from his office were

bottles of imported wine and champagne.

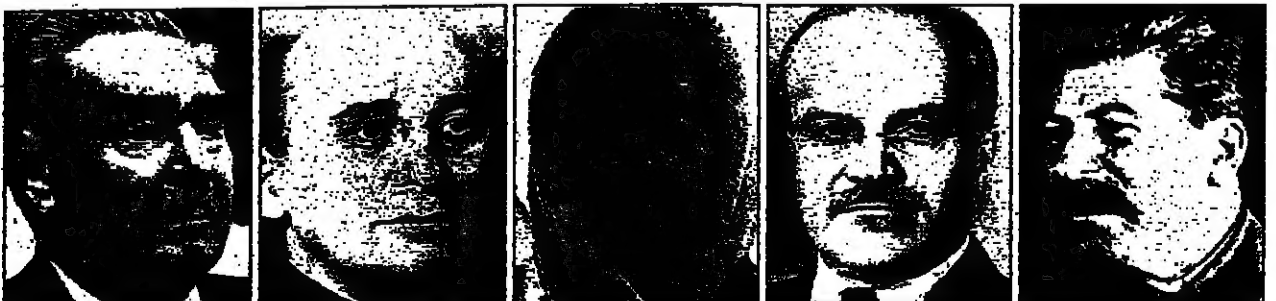
Lavrenti Beria, Stalin's murderous secret police chief, was by far the messiest. "I had the biggest problems with Lavrenti Palich [Beria]. Everything he wrote he would tear up into the tiniest pieces or cut into shreds with scissors. Those were the days before the vacuum cleaner, so I would have to pick up every scrap by hand. He was a strange character."

Although she felt sorry for Leonid Brezhnev and admitted that she had little sympathy for Nikita Khrushchev, especially after he ordered part of the Kremlin destroyed for a conference hall.

Mrs Malinkina had nothing to say about the brief Kremlin tenures of the late Soviet leaders Konstantin Chernenko and Yuri Andropov, and reserved commenting

about Mikhail Gorbachev, because she was not assigned to cleaning his floor at the Kremlin. As for her current boss, she said that she was forbidden from discussing President Yeltsin's notorious drinking habits, but did say that he was "not a very stable person" but otherwise "not a bad man". She admitted that she did vote for him in last summer's presidential elections, that he was secretly a God-fearing man and that he never failed to greet her when they met in the Kremlin.

Since Mrs Malinkina and Mr Yeltsin are the only two people in Russia who do not have to show a pass to get into the Kremlin, she was asked who ultimately carried more authority. "Boris Nikolayevich [Yeltsin] cleans Russia and I clean the Kremlin," she said. "It is hard to say who is better. He has more to clean — it is a bigger job."



From left, Brezhnev ("I cried when he died"), Beria ("messy"), Mrs Malinkina, Molotov ("tidy") and Stalin ("so kind")

Tories plan computer training for all adults

By ANDREW PIERCE AND JILL SHERMAN

JOHN MAJOR will announce plans in the new year to offer every adult in the country free computer training in a deal with some of the biggest private sector companies.

The pledge will be one of new ideas in the Tory Party election manifesto, which is close to completion. Mr Major plans to break with tradition and reveal his election pitch in January rather than wait for the publication of the manifesto at the general election.

The move is intended to show that the Tories have not run out of steam after 17 years in power and to try to regain the initiative from Labour, which is still far ahead in the opinion polls. Under the computer training initiative every person above school-leaving age will be offered a voucher which they can exchange for free training in information technology. The idea has been drawn up by a cabinet committee, chaired by Viscount Cranborne, which was set up at the beginning of the year to examine IT. The Downing Street policy unit has enthusiastically embraced the scheme.

The Cabinet Office and the Department of Trade and Industry are co-ordinating

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MATTHEW PARRIS
The Columnist of the Year

Trial in Dhahran could take place within days

Family pleads for nurse accused over murder

By RUSSELL JENKINS
AND MICHAEL BINYON

THE parents and brother of one of the British nurses facing public execution in Saudi Arabia described their anguish yesterday as "every family's nightmare".

The British consul plans to visit Lucille McLauchlan, 31, from Dundee, and Deborah Parry, 41, from the Midlands, early next week in the women's prison in Dhahran with a list of lawyers prepared to represent them.

Miss McLauchlan has convinced her parents of her innocence in a series of brief telephone calls. Stan and Ann McLauchlan looked distraught and tearful at a press conference in Dundee as they listened to their son John, 28, express their hope that she should be allowed to return home.

Both women are charged with murdering Yvonne Gifford, 55, an Australian theatre nurse at King Fahd Military Medical College where all three worked. They could face execution by public beheading if they are found guilty in an Islamic court.

He said: "As you can imagine, the last few days have been absolute hell for my family. We have spoken to Lucy very briefly on the phone and she has assured us of her innocence. We are obviously worried sick about her situation and are making efforts to secure the very best legal representation for Lucy."

The family spoke of their fears as a senior British barrister offered to send experienced legal counsel to Saudi Arabia to act as legal observers. Nicholas Stewart, QC, chairman of The Bar Human Rights Committee, said that lawyers could be in place at short notice.

"Having a daughter held in a foreign prison is every family's nightmare and media speculation about the possible outcome has made this a very harrowing experience for my family," said Mr McLauchlan.

"We have been told by Lucy that she has been treated well by the Saudi authorities but



Stan and Ann McLauchlan are convinced of their daughter's innocence and are trying to arrange defence lawyers in an attempt to end "every family's nightmare"

we are naturally concerned about her welfare."

Both women have been allowed to return to their apartments to collect personal belongings and bedding. Later unspecified nursing sources in Dhahran, quoted by a Scottish news agency, claimed that Miss McLauchlan had been browbeaten into signing a confession. The two women were subjected to five days of questioning in the absence of lawyers and told that they could go home if they signed.

It also quoted an unnamed journalist in Saudi Arabia claiming that Miss McLauchlan had been charged with being an accessory to

murder and has not been accused of stabbing the Australian nurse or hitting her with a hammer.

Defence lawyers enjoy only limited rights in Saudi Arabian courts, which are based entirely on the Sharia, Islamic jurisprudence interpreted strictly according to Koranic tradition. They may not even be allowed to appear before the three Sharia judges who will decide the nurses' fate. They certainly will not be allowed to cross-examine witnesses in any meaningful way.

There is no guarantee that either the lawyers or the women will know when the prison guards will come for

the women to bring them before the court. The trial may take place within days. Once before the court, the mullahs have only one option before them if the women are found guilty: a death sentence, most likely carried out as a public beheading.

Murder is punishable by death, but the victim's next of kin has the ultimate decision whether to enforce the penalty or whether to allow a convicted murderer to go free — usually after the payment of compensation, so called "blood money". The victim's family indicated again last night that they are not intending to seek clemency.

Triple-transplant survivor marries

The first patient to have a triple transplant in the United Kingdom is to marry his childhood sweetheart today. Haldene Butler, 25, from Omagh, Co Tyrone, will marry Julie Feathers, who stood by him throughout his lengthy illness and recovery.

Mr Haldene, who was suffering from an advanced form of cancer, had a "last-chance" liver, pancreas and small bowel transplant in March at St James Hospital, Leeds. The operation lasted eight and a half hours. In spite of a number of setbacks that saw him return to the hospital for a bowel operation, the couple set today as their wedding date. Miss Feathers said: "I am so happy. Everybody is looking forward to the big day."

Man charged after fire death

A man was charged last night with the murder of Michelle Bone-Kneil, 34, who died in a house fire in Wolverhampton on Christmas Day in which her two young children were badly injured. Alan Watkins, 29, from Bushbury, Wolverhampton, is to appear at Wolverhampton Magistrates' Court today. His wife, Sue, 28, who was also being questioned, was due to be released without charge.

Gorbachev birthmark gene found

American scientists have identified the gene responsible for port-wine stains, the disfiguring purplish birthmark associated with Mikhail Gorbachev. The stains, known as naevi, are caused by a mass of blood vessels that form incorrectly in the growing foetus. Professor Bjorn Olsson, of Harvard Medical School, and colleagues report in the journal *Cell* the discovery of a genetic mutation that causes such abnormalities. The hypothesis is strengthened by two further papers in the same journal.



Police hunt for serial bomber

Police are hunting a bomber who has exploded three crude devices in Manchester. The latest, on Boxing Day, destroyed a telephone kiosk. No warnings were given. Police said the devices were more powerful with each blast. All three were made from a metal pipe packed with explosive and capped at both ends, similar to the bomb that exploded during the Atlanta Olympics, in killing one person.

Footballer hurt in gang attack

The Birmingham City footballer Gary Breen, 23, had his hand broken and suffered head injuries when he was attacked as he left a north London restaurant with his fiancée. He needed 12 stitches after a bottle was smashed over his head when he confronted a gang trying to steal his car. He had surgery on his injured hand yesterday and he will be out of action for a month.

Police search camps for Kayleigh

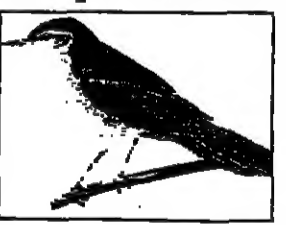
Police hunting for Kayleigh Ward, the missing nine-year-old from Chester, yesterday searched travellers' camps in North Wales but found no sign of the girl. Officers from the Cheshire and North Wales forces checked camps at Ruthin Road and Croes Newydd, just outside Wrexham. People returning home after Christmas are urged to check garages, sheds and caravans in case she is sleeping rough.

Finger found in takeaway meal

A woman eating a takeaway Chinese meal discovered a finger inside a piece of rubber glove. Debra Hand, 35, a care assistant from Urmsston, Greater Manchester, had bought the sweet and sour chicken after finishing her shopping on Christmas Eve. Police have checked staff at the Rainbow Chinese takeaway in Urmsston, and hospitals. The finger is being kept in cold storage.

Cetti's warbler takes up residence

Cetti's warbler, which took up residence in Britain only 24 years ago, is thriving and appears to be here to stay, according to the first national survey of the species. The small songbird is common on the Continent and was first recorded in Britain as an occasional lone vagrant in the 1960s. In 1971 several birds arrived. Three survived the winter and probably bred near Canterbury in 1972. In a survey in the spring of this year, English Nature and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds counted at least 535 singing males.



Battersea sees rise in stray dogs

Battersea Dogs Home entertained 671 strays over Christmas, 200 more than usual. Thirty-two dogs were taken to the home during the holiday period. Two of them, three-month-old Labrador-cross puppies, were found abandoned in a dustbin. A spokesman for Battersea said: "It seems more and more that older dogs are being abandoned. It is very sad."

Protest at prison body searches

Probation officers have protested about new searching procedures at jails in England and Wales, which they claim are intrusive and heavy-handed. More than 60 probation officers, mostly women, have complained to the prison authorities. The officers claim they are forced to submit to the body searches, which are not applied to police or immigration officers entering jails.

Hume attack on abortion

Continued from page 1
July under human fertilisation and embryology legislation. The tragedy of Dunblane had caused further reflection on violence in society.

He calls for a rediscovery of religion by society. "So often when people discuss religion, and think about it, their minds go to the institution or to the clergy. If they go a little deeper than that they see it in terms of social action, they see it in terms of keeping rules. They see it also as the realisation of a certain ideal."

Cardinal Hume does not refer to the electoral challenge being prepared by the Pro-Life Alliance, some of whose funding has come from Mohamed Al Fayed, the chairman of Harrods.

Among the prominent MPs likely to face a challenge include Labour frontbenchers Paul Boateng, Mo Mowlam, Clare Short and the Labour candidate Barbara Follett. Last month a 14-year-old schoolgirl refused to receive a prize from Ms Follett because of her strong support for abortion.

The Tories will also encounter difficulties. Prominent pro-choice supporters include Kenneth Clarke, the Chancellor, Virginia Bottomley, the Heritage Secretary, and Sir Nicholas Lyell, the Attorney-General.

Jane Roe, the co-ordinator of the Pro-Choice Alliance, said: "Cardinal Hume's comments merely serve to encourage extremists who are planning

to turn abortion into an election issue. He is helping to do that. Abortion should be a private matter between a doctor and the woman. It has no place on the hustings."

Cardinal Hume, in his interview, says that he was not surprised at the political reaction to *The Common Good* document, which had been interpreted by some as sympathetic to Labour social policy. He said: "It was an excellent examination of conscience for everybody in political life."

The idea that it was a kind of Labour Party manifesto was wrong, he said. "It was miles from that. No, this was an attempt to sum up the last 100 years of Catholic social teaching."

Tory attacked for planning to work as 'part-time' MP

By A STAFF REPORTER

LABOUR has denounced Archie Norman, the chairman of Asda and a Conservative parliamentary candidate, for claiming that being a backbench MP is not a full-time job. Mr Norman made the remark after stating that he wished to remain as part-time chairman of the supermarket group, if possible, for three years.

Brian Wilson, who is co-ordinating Labour's national election campaign, said that those who voted for Mr Norman, who is to fight the safe Tory seat of Tunbridge Wells, would be "short-changed".

Mr Norman, 42, who is married with one daughter, said in a newspaper interview last week: "Being a backbench MP is not a full-time occupation."

Mr Wilson said: "This is a remarkable illustration of how the Tories intend to approach the next Parliament. Perhaps the Tory chairman, Dr Brian Mawhinney, should say if this doctrine on backbench work-rate is to be the general rule



Norman: hopes to continue at Asda

for Tory candidates. Most MPs find that constituency and parliamentary work add up to something more than a full-time job. The idea that you can also run a grocery chain is bizarre."

This year, MPs got more than 20 weeks' holiday, with a 12-week summer recess, although most claim that they work on constituency matters when the House is not sitting.

Computer training for all planned

Continued from page 1
government action in conjunction with computer giants such as Microsoft, British Telecom and Dixons.

Training will be offered through outlets of these companies or further education centres and the scheme will have a minimal cost to the

taxpayer. Mr Major believes that the proposals will outflank the Labour Party, which has developed links with British Telecom to provide a computer in every school.

"We don't think the children are so important. They are already computer literate. We are targeting every adult," a

Downing Street source said.

Mr Major is spending the recess finalising a number of policy ideas which he can unveil during January and February, rather than waiting for the manifesto launch which is normally held after the start of the official three-week election campaign.

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Bottomley takes Del Boy to task over Mirror image



Nicholas Lyndhurst and David Jason dressed for a party in Christmas Day's *Only Fools and Horses*

By ANDREW PIERCE
POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

ONLY fools and horses work, the saying goes. Yesterday Virginia Bottomley demonstrated that a Heritage Secretary never stops working, by demanding an explanation over suspicions of advertising on the BBC's top-rated Christmas Day comedy.

The Labour-supporting *Daily Mirror* was displayed prominently in four scenes in *Only Fools and Horses*, and mentioned in one other. Mrs Bottomley has ordered her officials to examine whether the show, watched by 18.7 million people, breached the corporation's strict guidelines.

The BBC angrily rejected any

suggestion that it had done anything wrong in the show, which stars David Jason as the south London rogue "Del Boy" Trotter. A spokesman said: "It is the sort of newspaper Del Boy would read. But you can never tell with him. Next time he could be reading the *Financial Times*. We are very proud of him."

The character was shown reading the tabloid newspaper in his Peckham council flat. There was a publicity poster in the Trotters' favourite "caff". The cafe is a real-life eatery in Bristol and the BBC, as part of its contract, cannot change the decor, which included a copy of the poster.

In another scene the landlord of the Nag's Head, where the Trotter family co-ordinate many of their

dubious enterprises, was shown behind the bar immersed in the *Mirror's* sports pages. Nicholas Lyndhurst, one of the co-stars, was also filmed reading the newspaper.

The *Daily Mirror* trumpeted their contribution to the show with the headline: "Only fools don't read *The Mirror*" and crowed about the positive publicity reaped from the exposure. But Mrs Bottomley, who is no fan of the *Daily Mirror* or Del Boy, said: "The behaviour of the BBC, which is funded by public money, must be seen to be beyond reproach. There is also a place for light-hearted fun but product placement must be vigorously observed. The BBC is a major national institution which must be protected against allegations of unfairness."

Mrs Bottomley admitted she had not watched the episode. She thought that the standard of television over Christmas was excellent "but I have to admit that *Only Fools and Horses* is not my programme". Instead, she watched the Grace Kelly film *Dial M for Murder*.

The BBC's guidelines state clearly that it must "never give the impression that they are endorsing or promoting any product, service or company". They add: "In drama, comedy and entertainment programme producers have to consider whether there is a really strong editorial justification for using branded products as props."

Lord Rees-Mogg, a former BBC governor, said: "The BBC should conduct a thorough inquiry. I sus-

pect they may conclude this was indiscreet but innocent but they must establish whether there was deliberate product placement. If there was, the BBC has breached its guidelines."

But the BBC spokesman said: "The nature of the plot required that some of the leading characters read popular newspapers. At least one racing newspaper was in the same programme. It made the scenes seem more authentic. We reject any allegation of product placement. Del Boy reads popular newspapers."

Brendon Parsons, the deputy editor of the *Daily Mirror*, said: "I wonder if she would have made the same complaint if it had been a Tory-supporting newspaper, that was being read with such pleasure."

Rescue yachtsman tells of hunt for shipwrecked friend

By EDWARD GORMAN, SAILING CORRESPONDENT

THE British yachtsman who rescued a fellow competitor in a round-the-world race during terrible storms spoke yesterday of his relief at finding him alive.

Pete Goss, from Cornwall, sailed more than 150 miles off his course to find Raphael Dinelli, who was fighting hypothermia after sitting in his liferaft for 36 hours. Goss, 34, found him after an exhausting four-hour search in the southern Indian Ocean, most of it in darkness and very difficult conditions.

In a message to race headquarters in Paris from his yacht *Aqua Quorum*, which was about 1,200 miles southwest of Perth, Goss said: "I have just had the best Christmas present ever. Raphael is on board. He is very cold and happy and he has no injuries. I've just given him a cup of tea. Cheers, Pete."

The softly spoken former Royal Marine, who has the smallest boat in the non-stop, single-handed Vendée Globe race, later gave an update on the Frenchman's health. "He is very cold but not hypothermic," he said. "He is in very good spirits, but he has many bruises and is very stiff."

"His main concerns are his feet, which have been very



Pete Goss: was relieved to find his colleague

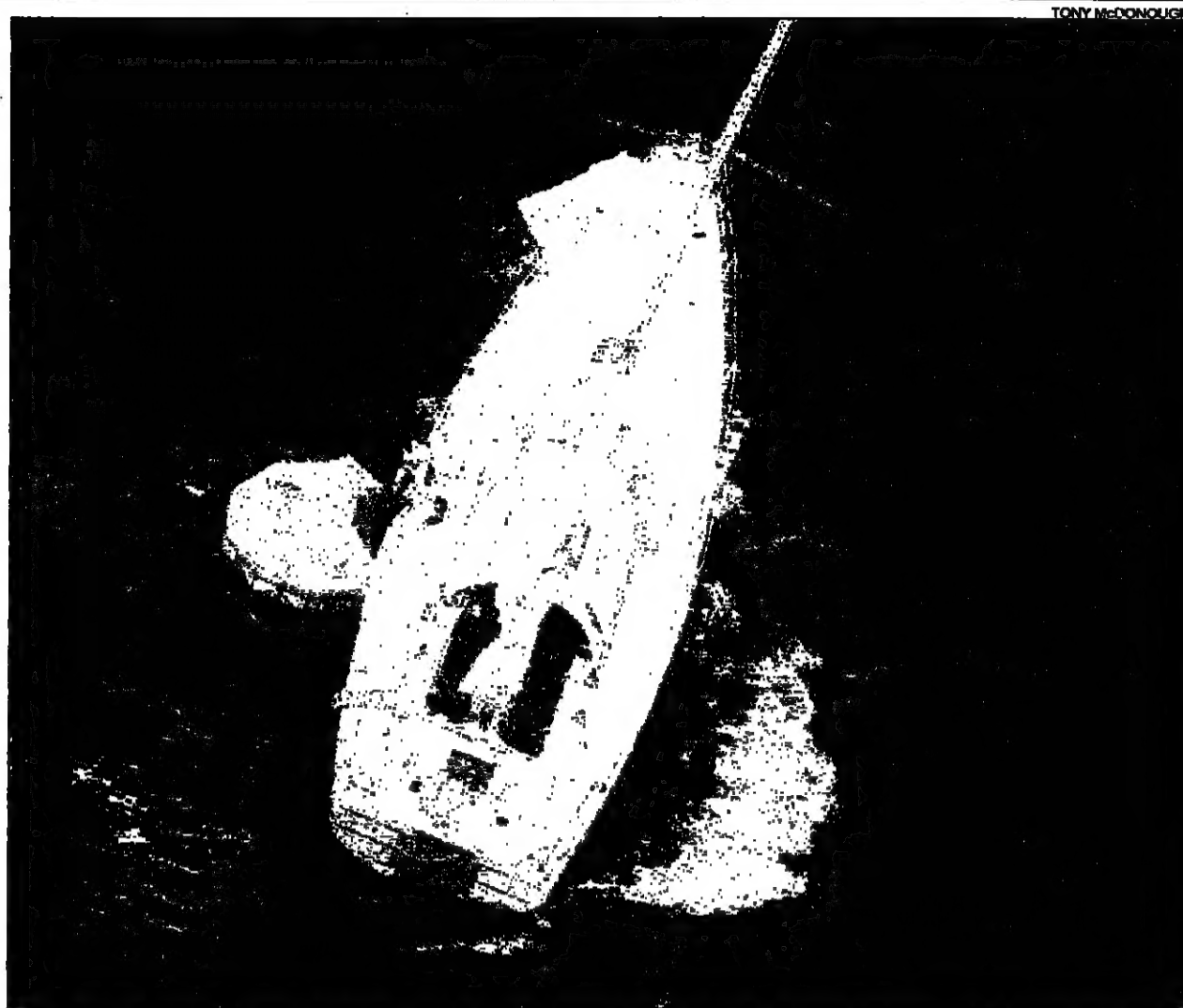
tained considerable damage and was knocked flat in the water several times as he tried to push as hard as he could. He had earlier told Paris: "I have 55-60 knots of wind and a vicious sea."

"My boat has been knocked down three times already. *Aqua Quorum* can't make a direct course, the weather is so bad here."

The rescue was assisted by an aircraft of the Royal Australian Air Force which helped to guide Goss towards Dinelli's position. The crew, who 12 hours earlier had dropped a survival pack and liferaft to the Frenchman, took pictures of the rescue before they left the scene.

In the past, mid-ocean rescues of single-handers have been carried out exclusively by land-based emergency services, causing considerable debate about the cost of such operations. Goss's rescue of Dinelli underlines, however, that often the best bet for a yachtsman in trouble is his fellow competitors.

Goss, who was praised for his "courage and determination" by Philippe Jeantot, the race director, will now carry on racing and is expected to drop Dinelli off at Hobart in Tasmania. He will

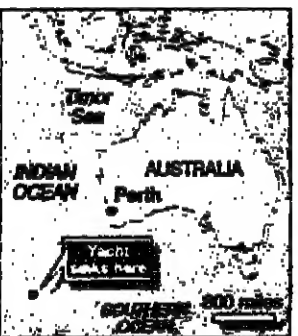


Raphael Dinelli being plucked from his liferaft by Pete Goss. He had spent 36 hours adrift in the ocean

receive redress for the time he has spent on the rescue so that his overall position in the race will not be affected.

The Vendée Globe is by a long way the world's toughest yacht race — held every four years, it attracts only the hardest skippers. Sixteen boats started from Les Sables d'Olonne in France on November 3 but there are now only 10 still racing after retirements, mainly as a result of collisions with floating debris or ice.

Dinelli was racing with the fleet but was not formally admitted to the race because he had failed to complete his 2,000-mile single-handed qualifying sail in the timeframe set out by the organisers. Goss still has 13,000 miles to go to the finish and is currently 3,000 miles behind the race leader.



Dinelli had an anxious and cold wait in the waters of the southern Indian Ocean after his yacht went down with winds blowing at more than 60 knots



Police question Mandy Allwood over allegations of loan fraud

By DANIEL MCGRODY

MANDY ALLWOOD, who sold the story of her octuplet pregnancy to a newspaper, is facing demands over a string of unpaid debts and a police investigation into a loan fraud.

She earned more than £350,000 in deals concerning her pregnancy, which followed fertility treatment, but lost all eight babies in October after rejecting medical advice that it would be safer to have some of them aborted.

Police released Miss Allwood, 31, on bail after she was arrested last week by fraud detectives from her home town of Solihull over an alleged

loan application made in her name earlier this year. Her boyfriend, Paul Hudson, 37, a former bankrupt, drove her to Solihull police station to be interviewed by fraud squad detectives. Police said: "A 31-year-old woman was arrested and interviewed about suspicion of conspiracy to defraud and the evasion of liability by deception."

She was bailed to report to Solihull police station in February. The inquiry is believed to concern an allegation that, on an application for a loan, the figure given for her income was inflated. The incident is thought to have occurred be-



Allwood: interviewed

fore she came to public attention in August.

Miss Allwood has faced county court judgments for debt and there were allega-

tions that her financial affairs were being examined by the Benefits Agency. There have been claims for unpaid debts from shops and companies in the West Midlands.

Sources close to Miss Allwood and Mr Hudson, who now live in Wimbledon, southwest London, said yesterday: "They feel that creditors are coming out the woodwork now they know they have money. All the bills have been, or will be, paid."

Miss Allwood intended to contest all the financial and legal claims against her, the source said. She would argue that many of the debts arose from agreements involving her former husband.

Surfing dog is victim of crime wave

By DAMIAN WHITWORTH

BRITAIN's top surfing dog was last night missing, presumed kidnapped. Max was being hunted by police after vanishing from outside a supermarket where its owner was buying it for Christmas dinner.

The four-year-old alston-collie cross has become a television star and a tourist attraction on the south Wales coast where its owner, Peter Bounds, the former captain of the British surfing team, runs a sailing and surfing centre.

On Christmas Eve Mr Bounds left Max tethered to railings outside a supermarket in Haverfordwest but returned to find his pet had disappeared. A search over



Max surfing off the coast of South Wales on the board specially adapted by his owner, Peter Bounds

the holiday period has yielded no clues.

"I'm absolutely shattered. We are inseparable and I miss him terribly," Mr Bounds said. "Max follows me everywhere I go. Normally I don't even bother to tie him up because Max will

always sit and wait for me. But because the town centre was busy I tied him lead to the railings and tested it was secure by pulling against the knot with my foot."

He added: "I'm convinced somebody has stolen him as a present for a child. It's just

very strange how quickly he went. I was only in the supermarket for a couple of minutes." He has put up 200 posters around Haverfordwest offering a £100 reward for the dog's safe return.

Max turned up at Mr Bounds's door as a stray two years ago and was then introduced to surfing. Mr Bounds would push the dog out to sea and it then rode the waves back in again. Max has its own wet suit and rides an 8ft beginner's surf board. Last month it was presented with the Pro Dog Pet of the Year award by the author Jilly Cooper.

"If the board is going off line Max has the ability to level it out," Mr Bounds said. "That's the advantage of four legs instead of two."



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Appeal to mother of baby left out in cold

By DAMIAN WHITWORTH

DOCTORS have issued a photograph of an abandoned baby found under a bush on Boxing Day in the hope that her mother will be encouraged to come forward.

The infant, who had been wrapped in a sheet and towel, is believed to have lain for several hours in temperatures of -3C before being found by Darren Simms, 13, a paperboy doing his round in Whickham, Gateshead. The baby, named Molly after the daughter of a paramedic who took her to hospital, was said to be progressing well in hospital.

A teenage mother who abandoned her newborn baby two days before Christmas was reunited with him yesterday. The 15-year-old, whose baby was found suffering from hypothermia in Ilford, east London, on Monday, walked into her local police station. The girl, in a distressed state, spent a short time with her son, named Joseph by nurses. His condition was said to be stable.



Molly in hospital yesterday, where she is said to be progressing well

Search may raise planes lost in Bermuda Triangle

By HARVEY ELLIOTT, AIR CORRESPONDENT

TWO British airliners may have been found almost 50 years after their unsolved disappearance in the Bermuda Triangle. A search to solve the mystery is being led by a retired pilot who was due to fly one of the planes.

A sports injury prevented Peter Wilby from taking the controls of the *Star Tiger*, which vanished in 1948. At the time an official report said that "no more baffling problem has ever been presented for investigation". Now aged 75, Mr Wilby plans to charter a robot submarine to raise the wrecks of the lost planes from the seabed 2,500ft below the Atlantic, and finally establish what happened.

More than £500,000 has been invested in a two-year search of the seas off Bermuda by Mr Wilby, two other former pilots and a business partner. The wreckage was discovered by the crew of a Canadian seabed surveyor boat, making sonar sweeps in the area where the two planes made their last reports.

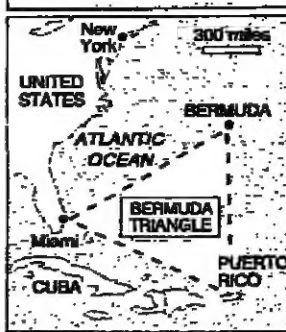
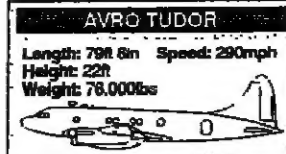
"The fact that I should have been on the first aircraft has

lived with me ever since," Mr Wilby said yesterday at his home in Great Missenden, Buckinghamshire. "All kinds of theories — some of them obvious fantasy — have been put forward for the accidents, but technology has now moved on fast. All the indications are that the wreckage is of very similar aircraft."

A remote-controlled submarine is to be sent to the seabed in February. If the wreckage is shown to be that of the crashed aircraft, attempts to raise them would be made in the summer. Mr Wilby said: "We believe we can raise them and send the wreckage to Farnborough for inspection and test. We may then be able to lay to rest one of the great aviation mysteries."

The *Star Tiger*, a Tudor plane of British South American Airways Corporation, flew from London for a six-week journey in South and Central America. A few days before departure, Mr Wilby hurt his foot playing rugby and reported sick.

Instead, Captain Brian McMillan was at the controls on



the leg from Santa Maria in the Azores to Bermuda. At 3.15 on Friday, January 30, 12 hours after take-off, the pilot made his last radio contact and was told that he was 340 miles northeast of Bermuda. Nothing more was heard of the plane, with 31 people on board. There was no Mayday call, no sign of wreckage and no oil slick.

A year later, an identical aircraft, the *Star Ariel*, was flying southwest from Bermu-

da to Jamaica with 13 passengers and a crew of six. After a routine radio message, the aircraft vanished without trace.

The inquiry into the first accident had reported: "No more baffling problem has ever been presented for investigation. In the complete absence of any reliable evidence as to either the nature or cause of the disaster, whatever happened will never be known and the fate of the *Star Tiger* must remain an unsolved mystery." An inquiry into the second loss also reported that the cause was unknown.

Mr Wilby is convinced that there was some form of defect with the Tudors. He does not believe that the Bermuda Triangle — the area of the Atlantic between Miami, Bermuda and Puerto Rico — is somehow jinxed. There are those who believe that about 100 lost ships and aircraft were the victims of phenomena ranging from rays from the lost city of Atlantis, extraterrestrial beings snatching Earthlings for scientific study, whirlpools, sudden mini-tornadoes or simply bad navigation.

Soldier who ran Raffles dies in fire at his home

By DANIEL MCGORRY

A FORMER leader of Oxfordshire County Council, who ran Raffles Hotel in Singapore while a serving soldier, died with his wife in a fire at their home yesterday.

Thirty firemen fought the blaze at Geoffrey Fowler's house in Clansfield, Oxfordshire, but were unable to rescue him or his wife, Joan. Mr Fowler, 74, was chairman of the council from 1995 until he retired in May. He sat as an independent councillor after resigning the Conservative whip.

Douglas Hurd, the former Foreign Secretary and MP for Witney, who was a close friend for more than 20 years, was among those who paid tribute. He said: "He was a staunch public servant and Oxfordshire owes him a great deal."

Mr Fowler was asked to run Raffles Hotel while with the Middlesex Regiment after service in the Second World War in Sicily and North Africa. He was later to become the manager of the Grosvenor Hotel in Mayfair and, as chief project manager for Trusthouse Forte, he was responsible for opening 38 new hotels.

Missing girl found hanged in woods

By STEWART TENDLER

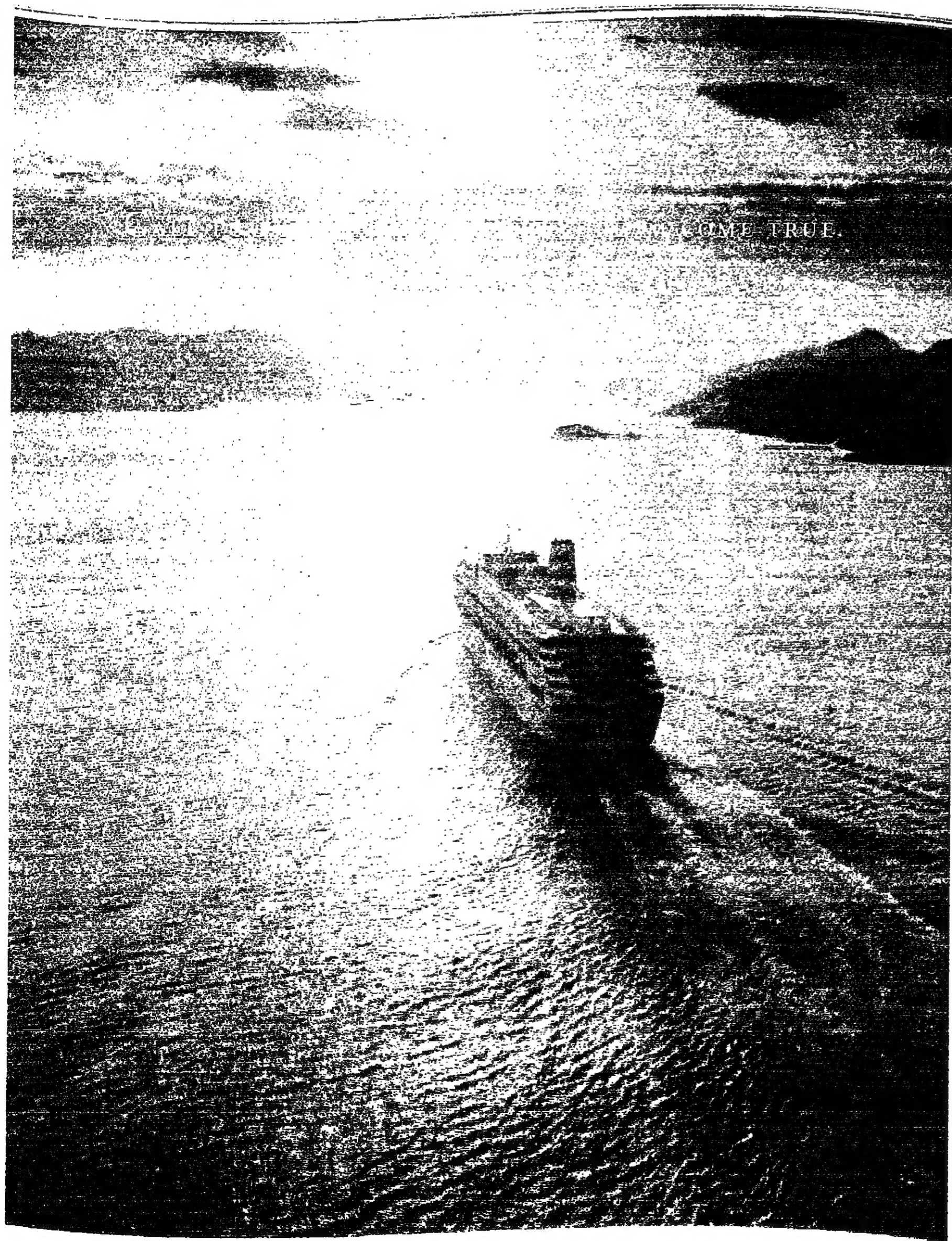
A GIRL aged 16 who disappeared from her home in South Wales on Christmas Eve walked into woods near by and hanged herself.

Stephanie Edmunds was missing from her home in Rhigos, near Aberdare, and was last seen waiting for a bus late on Tuesday afternoon. Her parents, Reginald and Diane, who had been awaiting news of her throughout Christmas Day and Boxing Day, identified her body at a hospital mortuary yesterday.

South Wales Police are trying to find anyone who may have seen Stephanie or who could give any information about her state of mind. They said that her death was not suspicious.

There were extensive searches over Christmas using a helicopter, tracker dogs and 100 volunteers. She was found in woodland about a mile from her home. The woodland borders on the back of the Edmunds' house.

Stephanie's brother, Philip, 18, said: "She was very popular and had loads of friends. She had everything in life to look forward to. None of the family can understand it."



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Code will make solicitors come clean on charges

By FRANCES GIBB
LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

SOLICITORS will have to tell clients in advance what their charges are and the likely cost of any action under strict rules being drawn up by the Law Society. The code will also require them to say what their hourly rate is and explain any extra costs.

About 60 per cent of the 19,000 complaints each year to the Office for the Supervision of Solicitors, which has replaced the Complaints Bureau, relate in part or in total to costs. Despite efforts by the Law

Society to persuade its members to disclose charges, many still pay only lip service to the notion.

Tony Girling, president of the Law Society, said: "Although at present solicitors are encouraged, as good practice, to disclose their charging rates, many are still not doing so in a way which meets the needs of clients." The new code, backed by sanctions, would enable clients to complain about inadequate professional services and obtain compensation or reductions in bills, he said.

David Hartley, head of solicitors' remuneration at the Law Society,

said: "The new code will make the obligations on solicitors clearer. At the moment, they are urged to give best information on costs — but beauty is in the eye of the beholder and solicitors can interpret this how they wish." The code, yet to go before the Law Society council, would encourage greater compliance and ensure that the public was given a clearer idea what costs were involved, he said.

There is increasing pressure for solicitors to make charging clearer, and for overall estimates where possible, from bodies such as the Legal Services Ombudsman and

the National Consumer Council. It was one of the hot topics at the Law Society conference in October.

Many solicitors insisted that it was not possible to estimate the costs of a piece of work, particularly with litigation. A number still did not quote an all-in hourly rate, instead citing their basic rate and then adding a "mark-up" on top, despite the irritation this caused among clients.

Large City law firms now frequently quote fixed, all-in rates for a specific piece of work because large companies expect it. Stuart Waterworth, team leader of client

relations at the Office for the Supervision of Solicitors said that one solicitor about whom a complaint was made boasted that "he was required to say that he charged by the hour, but not what the charge was".

Mr Waterworth cited the case of a woman who went to a solicitor with a complex matrimonial case. The firm quoted her an hourly rate of £75 and asked for £750 in advance. Some 20 months later, she got a bill for £8,000.

"Their hourly rate had risen at regular intervals during the period, yet she had never been informed,"

he said. "At no stage did they give her an interim bill or any indication of what costs had been run up. She should have been told at least every six months, if not more often, how costs were mounting."

He said that many solicitors abided by the letter of the "best practice" guidance on costs, but not the spirit. In a briefing paper to the Law Society conference, his office noted that the public were now "more empowered than ever; they know their rights, are ready to complain if the service they receive is not up to scratch and are aware of most forms of redress". Time

and again Citizens' Advice Bureau asked why solicitors were so hesitant to give firm guidelines on likely charges and were so hesitant to provide information on costs, the office said.

"It does little good explaining to people that solicitors' charges are based on a range of factors and are often impossible to calculate from the outset. Clients are now demanding a more detailed analysis of the likely bill they are going to face and are less willing to accept bills which come out of the blue or do not at least reflect a verbal or written estimate."

Stay thin and live longer on a diet of beer

By DAVID CHARTER

ACADEMICS have mounted a stout defence of beer, which they say can prolong life, reduce the risk of heart disease and does not in itself make drinkers fat.

In the December issue of *Chemistry in Britain*, Professor David Williams and Jeremy Philpott, a researcher from the University of Wales, Cardiff, say beer brewed with spring water and hops is fat-free. Beer bellies are caused not by beer, but by its effect as an appetite stimulant, they say.

Professor Williams, Professor of Speciation and Analytical Chemistry, said: "You can go on a beer diet. There are fewer calories in some beers than there are in skimmed milk." His promotion of beer as a dietary aid extends only to "the occasional pint", however. "Those on a calorie-controlled diet still need to reduce their beer consumption, because the body preferentially burns the carbohydrates derived from beer rather than body fat."

He added: "The evidence to date shows that those who drink a pint a day have an expected lifespan a year or two longer than abstainers. The modest levels of alcohol in beer improve blood circulation, reducing the risk of heart disease for light drinkers compared with that for heavy drinkers and abstainers."

"When used as part of a balanced diet, beer is beneficial for human health, and the infrequent mishap resulting from a little over-indulgence is no reason to brand beer as contrary to our wellbeing."

He said the 93 per cent water content of beer more than compensated for the dehydrating effects of the alcohol. A pint provided protein and B vitamins, as well as 15g of carbohydrate from the barley and malt, while being virtually free of toxic metals. "Even when the few species of bacteria that can survive in beer are present, they generally compromise only the taste and appearance of the beer, rather than posing any serious risk to health."



Yvonne Fox is playing the heroine Jemima Nicholas, who captured 14 French troops. After the surrender, prisoners persuaded local girls to help them to escape.

Invaders hungry for encore of French farce

Two hundred years ago, Fishguard earned a place in history as the scene of the last armed invasion of Britain. Alan Hamilton reports on plans to commemorate the event

THE last armed invasion of Britain was severely weakened by too much food and drink, and surrendered after facing the local womenfolk. Two hundred years later, the French have willingly accepted an invitation to return to commemorate their defeat.

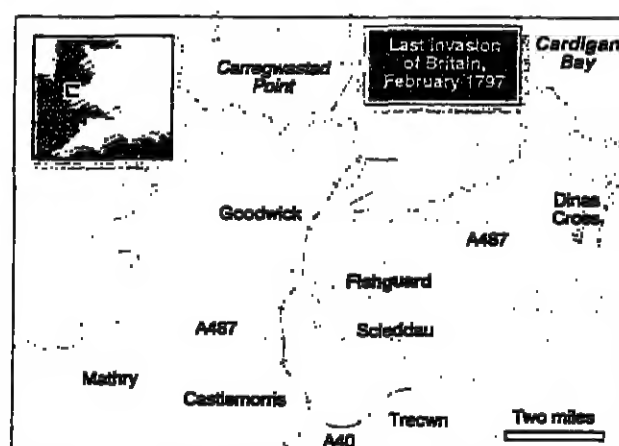
The French landing in west Wales in February 1797, during the Napoleonic Wars, was a blend of high farce and disaster, involving a shady American, a local heroine, the only British Army battle honour awarded for service in the home country, and first issue of paper money by the Bank of England.

A year of commemoration is planned at Fishguard, close to the landing site in Pembrokeshire. A leading role will be played by Yvonne Fox, warden of old people's sheltered housing in the town. Dressed in a traditional red cape and wielding a pitchfork, she will play Jemima Nicholas, a sizeable 47-year-old

cobbler who is said to have captured 14 French soldiers single-handed and to have terrified the rest into surrender by being mistaken for a reinforcement of King George's Redcoats.

A detachment of France's Napoleonic Association — which relives the dictator's campaigns — is to visit Fishguard in the summer to re-enact the surrender on Goodwick Sands, close to the ferry terminal for Ireland. Mike Woakes, director of the festival, said: "We have said we are commemorating the event, not celebrating it. That enables us to invite the French, and they have accepted."

The invasion was intended to foment unrest, linking up with rebels in Bristol and Liverpool to ignite a peasants' revolt. A force of 1,400 released prisoners, ne'er-do-wells and other scallywags were assembled under the command of William Tate, an



American who had fought in the War of Independence but who had been forced to flee to Paris after trying to sell Florida to the French.

Four French ships were sighted in the Bristol Channel on February 22, apparently heading for Bristol. Bad weather and a lack of commitment apparently forced them to abandon the voyage. When they passed Fishguard, they decided to go there instead.

The local militia panicked and fired their eight-pounders from Fishguard fort. All the shots were blanks, as the fort had no ammunition. The fleet

turned tail, and at dead of night landed its troops on a headland two miles west.

The 1,400 scrambled ashore and set about foraging. Local farmhouses were well stocked with food and drink, partly because of a brisk local smuggling trade and partly because a local farmer had laid in copious supplies for his forthcoming marriage. By next morning, a substantial part of the invasion force was drunk and incapable, while local residents had melted into the distance.

Lord Cawdor, a wealthy landowner, mobilised a force

of 600 men, many armed only with scythes and pitchforks, with the Pembrokeshire Yeomanry. Then Jemima Nicholas and other women of the district came on the scene, looking fearsome in their tall Welsh hats and red capes, pitchforks at the ready.

Tate ordered his invasion force to advance, but the men turned their muskets on him, pointing out that they were now trapped, as the ships that had landed them had sailed away. Tate sent a message to Cawdor: "The circumstances under which the body of French troops under my command were landed at this place renders it unnecessary to attempt any military operations, as they will tend only to bloodshed and pillage."

Within 48 hours of the landing, Cawdor accepted the French surrender, popularly thought to have been signed in what is now the Royal Oak pub in Fishguard town centre. The encounter had resulted in the deaths of two Welshmen and the injury of one woman, who received a government pension of £40 a year for receiving a French musket ball in her leg. The *Times* reported four French casualties, three killed by farmers

who found them stealing cattle and bread. News of the invasion sent jitters through an already nervous country and provoked such a run in the Bank of England by savers wishing to recover their gold sovereigns that the bank was forced for the first time to issue paper banknotes, in denominations of £1 and £2.

Cawdor and the Pembrokeshire Yeomanry were heroes, despite being spared the need to engage the enemy. They were long ago subsumed by merger and are now 224 (Pembroke Yeomanry) Squadron, Royal Logistic Corps (Volunteers), a Territorial Army unit with a distinction unmatched by any other unit of the British Army. The French were imprisoned in various jails until they could be exchanged for British prisoners of war.

A group in Pembroke jail befriended two Welsh girls, who helped 25 of them to escape. They stole Cawdor's yacht and sailed out to commandeer a merchantman to make their way home. At Cherbourg, they were unwelcome. They found themselves locked up again in their own country.

Vandals destroy fleet of 37 buses

Vandals wrecked 37 buses and smashed windows of six others after breaking into a depot in Bolton over Christmas. Stagecoach Ribblesdale, the bus operator, said vehicles had been driven into each other and damage was estimated at £200,000. Services in Bolton and north Manchester were badly disrupted yesterday and replacement vehicles had to be brought in.

McAliskey wait

Róisín McAliskey, 25, daughter of the former MP Bernadette McAliskey, was further remanded in custody until January 3. She faces deportation proceedings concerning a mortar attack on the Osnabrück barracks in Germany.

Hunt for killer

Police hunting the killer of a man outside a Portsmouth public house on Boxing Day are trying to trace another man seen running away afterwards. The victim, believed to be in his late 20s, was stabbed during an argument.

Record posted

Postmen in Scotland delivered 175 million Christmas cards and letters, beating last year's record by 22 million. Two billion cards were posted in Britain in the four weeks up to Christmas, compared with 1,867 million last year.

999 call attack

An ambulance answering a 999 call was rammed and stopped by teenage joyriders in the Twinbrook area of west Belfast. They shouted abuse and threw cans and objects at the crew but fled when taxi drivers came to the rescue.

English welcome

The Scottish Tourist Board is wooing the English in an attempt to increase spending by visitors north of the border. The spring campaign will feature posters on the London Underground, and television and newspaper advertisements.

Road evictions

Bailiffs arrived at dawn to evict about six protesters from a camp in the path of a £65 million scheme to improve the A30 in Devon. The protesters' treehouses at Allercombe, near Exeter, were pulled down and one person was arrested.

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Workers must toil for one more day before 1997 tax burden lifts

By Robin Young and Anne Ashworth

BRITONS will labour for 144 days in 1997 just to pay their taxes for the year. Tax Freedom Day, the date on which the average employee stops handing every penny of his wage packet to the Government and starts working for himself, will fall on Saturday, May 24, according to a report published today by the Adam Smith Institute, a free-market think-tank.

In 1996, 143 days were spent working for the Government to pay income tax, National Insurance, council tax and excise duties. The extra day results from the tax changes in last month's Budget.

The report says that, from June 1992 until May 1993, Tax Freedom Day generally, if gradually, moved earlier in the calendar. In 1982, the average taxpayer started to feel the benefit of his endeavours only on June 6. By 1993, Tax Freedom Day fell on May 15. According to the report, the date is now falling later in the year as a result of the Govern-

REAL PAY DAY

Tax freedom days (not including government borrowing)	
1965	April 29
1970	May 25
1975	May 27
1980	May 28
1985	June 1
1990	May 27
1995	May 15
1996	May 16
1997	May 24

ment's attempts to bring public-sector finances back into balance through higher taxation.

The report's author, Gabriel Stein, an economist and a director of Lombard Street Research, believes government borrowing should be added to the total burden of taxation, since it must eventually be paid for by future taxation. If this extra burden was included, Tax Freedom

Day 1997 would be postponed until Wednesday, June 4.

Though nearly 40 per cent of the national income will be taken in taxes in 1997, the United Kingdom has one of the lightest tax burdens in Europe. Ireland, Germany, Greece, Austria, France, Luxembourg, Italy, Belgium, The Netherlands, Finland, Sweden and Denmark all impose heavier taxes. The European Union average for Tax Freedom Day (not including borrowing) is June 5, according to the institute's calculations. The most onerous tax regime, in Denmark, obliges citizens to work until the end of July before the burden lifts.

By contrast, many high-growth countries, including Switzerland and the United States, have a lighter tax burden than the United Kingdom. In Japan Tax Freedom Day falls as early as April 21. Tax Freedom Day 1997, by Gabriel Stein (ASI, 23 Great Smith Street, London, SW1P 3BL; £14)



Darlington town centre: luring tourists from Malaysia with friendliness, an unhurried pace of life and an ever-changing countryside

Darlington: a welcome break from the tropical sun

By Emma Wilkins

ALONG the gentle fringes of the South China Sea, would-be adventurers are looking out on just another sunny day and dreaming of faraway places with something different and special to offer. Places like Darlington, for example.

The Mayor of the Co Durham town was celebrating yesterday after it was named as the top European tourist

attraction by an east Malaysian newspaper. A glowing, full-page tribute said: "The pace of life is less hurried, the people are friendly and helpful, and the traffic is less dense and the drivers are so polite." The countryside is an "ever-changing vista of emerald-green fields, ominous storm clouds and gaunt trees".

Gordon Plummer, the Mayor, is ready to welcome extra tourists as a result of the tribute, published to

highlight Malaysia Airlines' new link with Teesside Airport. He said: "We are very proud that all our hard work has paid off. We have pedestrianised the town centre and reclaimed the Market Square as a public space. We already have quite a few visitors from Asia and we will be happy to welcome any more."

The article, which also highlighted the town's contributions to world culture, such as the Quaker move-

ment and the railway pioneer George Stephenson, was discovered by Pete Sayers, 37, an abseiling instructor from Darlington, when he was handed a copy of the *Sark Tribune* during an internal Malaysian flight. Mr Sayers, who was in Borneo to instruct oil-rig workers on abseiling techniques, said: "When you are halfway around the world, you get a bit of a shock when you see your home town in the paper."

Loophole closed for motorbike learners

By Jonathan Prynn

THOUSANDS of learner motorcyclists have been told that they will be riding illegally unless they take a training course under rule changes effective from Wednesday.

Current laws give learners with full car licences exemption from having to take any test on motorcycles with engines up to 125cc. The loophole is being closed to prevent users of small bikes who also drive a car from becoming "permanent" learners.

The compulsory day-long basic training course will give those who pass the right to ride on the road with their L-plates on motorcycles of up to 125cc on either a provisional motorcycle licence or a full car licence. However, riders on mopeds with engines up to 50cc will still be able to ride without L-plates and without taking the course as long as they have a full car licence.

The training consists of a basic course in practical road and off-road riding skills under close supervision, and instruction in safety awareness. The Driving Standards Agency has written to all registered keepers of motorcycles up to 125cc telling them of the new regulation.

Dance sets record for the music industry

By a Staff Reporter

THE British recording industry is still thriving, with more records released this year than ever, according to figures released yesterday from the Entertainment Research and Analysis survey, covering all types of music.

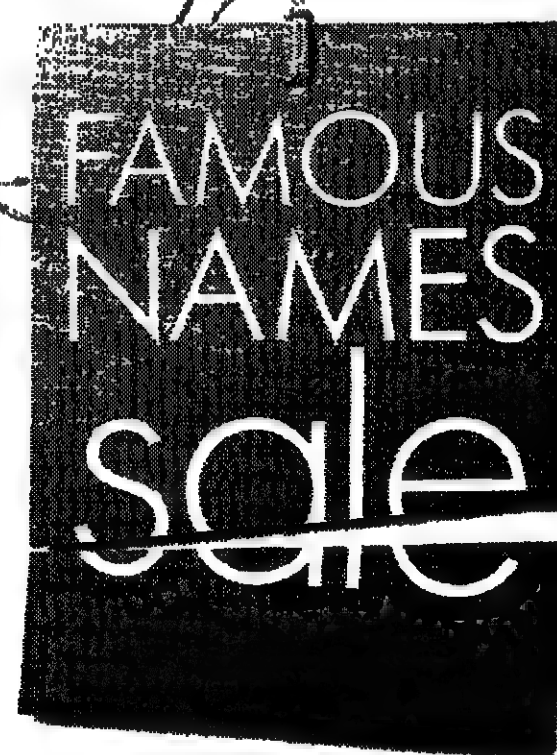
Album releases were up 26 per cent at 16,148 since last year and single releases increased 16 per cent to 6,939. Ticket sales for concerts and festivals were also up.

Dance music accounted for well over half the singles released and more than one in ten albums, the survey in this week's *Music Week* magazine said. More than a fifth of albums were multi-artist compilations. The fastest growing areas were jazz, old favourites and the spoken word.

The Beatles seem ever-popular. As well as further anthologies, 13 CDs of interviews and 20 albums of Beatles songs performed by other acts came out.

The artist who released the most albums was the French singer Charles Aznavour, who put out 28. Twenty-five albums were released of the jazz saxophonist Charlie Parker, 23 of Duke Ellington and 21 of Billie Holiday.

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Thai business link fuels Clinton funding row

FROM IAN BRODIE IN WASHINGTON

A THAI-AMERICAN businesswoman who was a heavy Clinton campaign contributor and a frequent visitor to the White House emerged yesterday as a central figure in the growing furor over improper fund-raising.

In June, Pauline Kanchanalak took top officials from a Thai business conglomerate with large investments in China to meet Mr Clinton for coffee. The main topic of conversation during the hour-long meeting was American policy towards China.

On the same day Mrs Kanchanalak and her sister-in-law contributed \$135,000 (£82,000) to the Democratic National Committee. The committee has since returned a total of \$250,000 to Mrs Kanchanalak after she admitted the money was actually given by her mother-in-law. Election laws forbid donations made in another's name.

These disclosures raise new questions about whether wealthy Asians who could neither vote in the American election nor contribute to the campaign were, in effect, buying access to Mr Clinton and whether foreign policy was being unduly influenced. White House officials deny both suggestions, but the issues will be raised by Republicans at Congressional hearings in the new year. In addition, the Justice Department has a wide-ranging task force investigating Democratic campaign contributions.

Mrs Kanchanalak, an American resident, helped to establish the US-Thai Business Council for trade promotion. As a major Democrat donor, she visited the White House at least 26 times during Mr Clinton's first four years for dinners, lunches and other events. On the coffee morning, she took along two officials from the business council and three executives from C.P. Group Ltd of Bangkok — a business empire with control of 250 companies in more than 20 countries. One of the trio was Dhanin Chearavanont, chairman of C.P. Group, who has been described as the

twelfth richest man in Asia. Lanny Davis, White House special counsel, said he could not comment on the propriety of inviting foreign executives to a meeting for supporters of the DNC. He insisted that "to the best of our knowledge" no funds were solicited in the White House, which would have been illegal. Mrs Kanchanalak has declined to comment. The scope of the Democrats' fund-raising through Asian connections is proving an embarrassment at the start of Mr Clinton's second term. The President has already described his meeting at a coffee morning with a Chinese arms dealer, whose company was later implicated in weapons smuggling, as inappropriate. He has ordered a tighter screening of visitors.

Anger over poll fraud

Santa Ana, California: Nineteen people told a newspaper they voted in the House of Representatives election, although they did not hold American citizenship. In the poll, Bob Dornan, a conservative Republican, lost a bid for a tenth term to a Democratic newcomer by less than 1,000 votes.

The 19 acknowledged that they had not completed the naturalisation process, which is required before a person can vote, the Los Angeles Times reported yesterday.

Mr Dornan claims that hundreds of people who should not have voted did so, costing him re-election. He was beaten by Loretta Sanchez, the daughter of Mexican immigrants.

The pugnacious Orange County Republican said on Thursday that a new election should be held because of voter fraud. The newspaper reported that 18 of the 19 voters were taking citizenship classes with Hermandad Mexicana Nacional, an immigrant-rights group. (AP)

The Democratic National Committee has accepted there were transgressions and has returned at least \$1.2 million in questionable contributions. The White House has sent back another \$640,000 in dubious donations intended to help Mr and Mrs Clinton to pay legal bills incurred by Whitewater and other investigations into their alleged abuses of power. The fund-raising excesses point to over-zealousness by John Huang, a Chinese-American.

The burgeoning ruckus is generating a host of way-out conspiracy theories. Right-wing critics have even questioned why Mr Clinton recently created a national park in an area of Utah that has huge reserves of coal. They suggest it was to help the Lippo Group, an Indonesian conglomerate with large coal-mining interests that has been linked to million-dollar contributions to Democrats.

Leases on the Utah coal were held by Andalex Resources, a British family concern. Its chairman, Peter Green, lives in Bermuda. A company spokesman said while Mr Clinton's decision to create the park was a disappointment, they did not believe that helping Lippo was the reason.



Doll eats girl's hair

A hairdresser and an assistant work to remove a battery-operated Cabbage Patch Doll that had munched about eight inches of Sarah Stevens's hair and became caught in the seven-year-old's scalp. The doll had to be taken apart piece by piece in the salon in Griffith, Indiana, when it

would not let go. It took 30 minutes to remove more than 20 screws, open the battery compartment and pull apart the mouth to free Sarah's blond hair. Sarah was shaken but unharmed. "I have a little headache," she

said. The Cabbage Patch Snack Time Kids Doll is designed to chew automatically when plastic French fries or other items are placed in its mouth. It has no on-off switch. Glenn Bozarth, a spokesman for

the doll's maker, Mattel Inc, said the toy was safe and that he knew of no other complaints. He added that it was hard to imagine such a thing happening unless the child stuck her hair into the doll's mouth. Sarah, asked whether she wanted another one of the dolls, answered with an unequivocal "Yeah". (AP)

Real millionaires spurn luxury, study shows

FROM BRONWEN MADDOX IN WASHINGTON

IF YOUR neighbour backs a new Mercedes out of his mansion driveway each morning, do not assume he is a millionaire. He is more likely to be the type known in Texas as "Big hat, no cattle" — more show than substance — according to a new book on America's wealthiest people.

Real dollar millionaires are more likely to drive second-hand cars, wear suits bought at discount stores, and sit at the kitchen table with their wives clipping special offer coupons, says the survey. "Most of the truly wealthy in this country don't live in Beverly Hills or Park Avenue

— they live next door." The *Millionaire Next Door*, by Thomas Stanley and William Danko, two academics from New York State University who specialise in the study of rich people, is designed to help "hard-working, well-educated, high-income people" who wonder why they do not have more money in the bank.

Out of America's 100 million households, 3.5 million have assets worth \$1 million (£625,000) or more. In an apparent confirmation of the American Dream, the authors say that four-fifths of these people have made their money in one generation. They tell a

moral tale of discipline and self-denial.

"It is seldom inheritance or advanced degrees or even intelligence that builds fortunes in this country," they argue, but the result of hard work, saving and spending less than you earn. In their survey, millionaires tended to answer "yes" to three questions:

- Are you very frugal?
- Were your parents very frugal?
- Is your spouse more frugal than you?

Bill Gates, founder of the Microsoft computer empire, and Wall Street junk bond

dealers may catch the headlines, but American millionaires tend to have made their money in distinctly unglamorous businesses such as welding contractors, pest controllers, paving contractors, and stamp dealers.

A typical millionaire would be a 57-year old man, married with three children. One in five is retired; of those working, about two-thirds are self-employed. Half of the wives of millionaires do not work; if they do, they teach.

People of English descent, a tenth of the population, make up a fifth of all millionaires with German descendants

narrowly behind. But head for head, people of Scottish descent are most likely to be millionaires.

The authors have not surveyed many Asian entrepreneurs. But they include a warning for new immigrants: the longer an ethnic group has been in America, the less likely it is to produce millionaires, as people are rapidly seduced by the taste for high consumption. To help your children cultivate the same values, never tell them that you are rich.

□ The *Millionaire Next Door*, published by Longstreet Press, Atlanta, Georgia.

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White rhinos: an endangered species

Vets hunt runaway rhino in Louisiana

FROM JAMES BONE IN NEW YORK

A WHITE rhinoceros, one of only 6,000 worldwide, was shot in Louisiana after it escaped from a private zoo and charged veterinary surgeons trying to tranquillise it. The pregnant three-and-a-half-tonne female broke through a metal fence shortly before dawn on Thursday at the Zoo of Acadiana in Broussard after fighting with a male rhino. The renegade rhino was spotted crossing the US90 highway by a local sheriff's deputy. When three vets armed with tranquilliser guns caught up with her in a car park, Casey Lamb, a curator from the Baton Rouge Zoo, tried to fire a tranquilliser dart. "It was very close to getting a clear shot. But at the last minute, the rhino bolted and went right toward my back-up, who had the kill rifle," he said. "He had no alternative but to shoot to protect his own life."

The frightened rhino got within 15ft of Eric White, a vet at the Acadiana zoo, before he shot her between the eyes. "He was so shook up, I took the rifle and finished her off," said Ron Cline, the zoo's curator.

The number of white rhino in the wild has been dwindling because of poachers seeking its horn for traditional oriental medicine. A native of southern Africa, the animal is one of the world's most endangered species.

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Israelis prepare for war against Syria 'next year'

FROM ROSS DUNN IN JERUSALEM

THE Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, has asked for a substantial increase in the defence budget as some senior military officials began preparing for a war with Syria next year.

In an interview published yesterday Mr Netanyahu said: "I believe that in the future, after we stabilise the economy and put it back on the right track, we will be able to substantially increase the defence budget." Although he did not link his comments with Syria, Israeli defence officials have made clear the army needs more money to prepare for the possibility of war.

Major-General Matan Vilnai, the army Deputy Chief of Staff, said on Thursday: "The working estimate for 1997 is that we can find ourselves in a military confrontation with Syria. This year we are directing our training ... to stand against the Syrian Army."

The Israeli army Chief of Staff, Lieutenant-General Am-

non Lipkin-Shahak, yesterday took his deputy to task, saying the Jewish state was not close to war with Syria. He added that there was always a theoretical danger of war but said alarmist statements must cease.

His assessment, however, does not tally with other senior Israeli military figures, including the head of air force intelligence, who said at the beginning of the week that the probability of war could no longer be characterised as low and that Syria remained "Israel's number one confrontation state".

Relations between the two countries have been tense since September, when Syria moved thousands of its troops in Lebanon to within striking distance of Israeli army positions on the Golan Heights. Syria is demanding that the strategic area, captured during the 1967 war, be handed back as part of any peace treaty with the Jewish state.

General Vilnai said Israel had changed its attitude to-

wards the Syrians since that troop deployment. He said after that Israeli defence forces had undergone "a massive improvement in readiness for war, which finds expression in the intensification of the training on land, sea and air, in an improvement of the stocks in the emergency warehouses, and in military training exercises that, for the most part, take place in the Golan Heights".

He insisted that the probability of war was definitely higher than a year or two ago. "We will do everything we can so a war does not break out, but mistakes happen," he said. "Wars also break out as a result of misunderstandings, and that is why we have already diverted budgets of hundreds of millions of dollars from the foreign [American] aid in order to improve our preparedness for war."

Last week Syria signalled it was ready to resume peace talks next month for the first time since Mr Netanyahu's May election. The stumbling block is Syria's insistence that the talks start where they left off with the previous Government, which had been willing to give back at least part of the Golan Heights in exchange for peace. Mr Netanyahu has said that no part will be returned.

Washington: President Clinton and Mr Netanyahu are expected to meet early in the new year to discuss peace efforts on the West Bank, the White House said yesterday (Ian Brodie writes).

Two weeks ago, Mr Clinton upset the Israeli leader by describing settlements there as an obstacle to peace. Mr Netanyahu's request for a quick meeting to clear the air was turned down.

Mr Clinton's attitude softened after Dennis Ross, his Middle East special envoy, prodded the Israelis and Palestinians into an agreement over the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Hebron.



Opposition MPs settle down to "sleep" in the national assembly yesterday to protest against the ruling party members who passed a labour law in their absence

Million South Koreans hold strike over new labour law

FROM REUTERS IN SEOUL

NURSES walked off hospital wards, shipyards were idle and thousands of militant unionists protested in Seoul yesterday as more than a million people were called out on strike.

Anxious residents in the South Korea capital braced themselves for transport chaos today as subway drivers — who usually ferry more than four million passengers a day — voted to join the stoppages.

The biggest shock was a decision by the usually docile Federation of Korean Trade Unions to confront the Government over the passage of a

tough labour law. The federation said a 24-hour strike from noon yesterday would be extended until the end of the year — and possibly beyond.

That move threatens to bring out about 1.5 million workers. On Thursday the more militant Korea Confederation of Trade Unions had instructed its 500,000 members to down tools. While union members account for less than 20 per cent of the workforce, they command the economy's heights. Production of cars and ships — two big foreign exchange earners — has virtually halted.

Leather-clad motorcyclists roared in protest through the southeast city of Ulsan, home of the Hyundai Group, makers of "everything from computer chips to ships". They waved banners and sounded motorcycle horns.

Meanwhile riot police watched warily as 15,000 workers donned red headbands and gathered in Seoul's financial district, shouting anti-government slogans.

Han Seung-soo, the Finance Minister, said the law protected jobs by making South Korea's economy more flexible and thus more competitive.

Uruguay Government infuriated President Fujimori, who recalled his ambassador.

Señor Fujimori hopes to crack the resolve of the rebels over time. He sent the Bishop of Ayacucho, Monsignor Juan Luis Cipriani, into the residence to sway the rebels "spiritually", and his daughter, Keiko Sophia, delivered Christmas gifts.

The rebel leader, Nestor Cerpa Cartolini, alias "Comandante Evaristo", hung a sign in a window saying: "Thank you, Happy Christmas." But he said on radio that he would not release the hostages alive unless hundreds of his comrades were freed from prison.

Guatemala marks end to 36 years of civil war

FROM AGENCIES FRANCE-PRESS IN GUATEMALA CITY

RADIO broadcasts urged people to drape their houses with white banners to give Guatemala's capital a festive look as it prepared to mark the end of 36 years of bloodshed in Latin America's longest civil war.

Tomorrow at 11pm GMT, the chiefs of three of the four rebel groups comprising the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (URNG) movement and an official from the fourth group will sign a peace treaty with the conservative Government of President Arzu.

Three left-wing rebel commanders, Rolando Morán, Carlos González and Pablo Moncada, are expected to arrive in the capital today. Another top commander, Gaspar Ilom, will be represented by his lieutenant.

Señor Ilom, son of Miguel Ángel Asturias, the 1967 Nobel Prize-winning author, has had his reputation tarnished by his group's alleged links to the kidnapping of a wealthy woman several months ago. The incident threatened to derail the five-year peace negotiations just as they seemed to be bearing fruit.

The evening ceremony at the national palace is expected to draw delegations from scores of countries including Spain, Mexico, Venezuela, the Dominican Republic, Sweden, Colombia and Cuba.

In Lima on Thursday, left-wing guerrillas occupying the Japanese Ambassador's residence released José María Argueta, the Guatemalan Ambassador to Peru, in an apparent gesture of goodwill in recognition of the peace process.

The signing is a major step in the campaign to end the civil war. Since it began in November 1960, an estimated 150,000 people have died and 50,000 have disappeared. Hundreds of thousands of Guatemalans, most of them indigenous, have been displaced or forced into exile.

The Government and the URNG signed a ceasefire in Oslo on December 4 and another agreement, on constitutional reforms, in Stockholm on December 7.

China jails Tibetan for spying

Peking: China has jailed a Tibetan Fulbright scholar for 18 years for spying. Ngawang Choephel, 30, touring Tibet to produce a documentary about folk music and dance, was detained in August 1995.

A local report, monitored by the BBC, said the scholar had confessed to having been sent by "the Dalai [Lama] clique" to conduct espionage activities "under the pretext of collecting information on Tibetan folk songs and dances". (Reuters)

Taleban forces take airbase

Islamabad: Taleban captured the main opposition airbase of Bagram, north of Kabul, the Afghanistan Press, said. The Pakistan-based news service said Taleban forces entered Bagram — killing at least 50 opposition fighters — after capturing the nearby opposition stronghold of Qarabagh. (Reuters)

Kenyan police shoot rustlers

Nairobi: Security forces have shot six more bandits who were blamed for the killing of a German tourist during a cattle raid in northern Kenya. This brings the total number of rustlers killed so far this week to 11. The Kenyan press reported, the tourist died when the vehicle he was in encountered rustlers crossing a road with cattle. (AFP)

Coma ends for Memphis killer

New York: James Earl Ray, the convicted killer of Martin Luther King Jr in Memphis, has emerged from his coma "with a big grin" after suffering liver and kidney damage (James Boone writes). Doctors said his condition was serious, not critical, but he had only a 10 per cent chance of survival.

Storm toll 'worst in Malaysia'

Kota Kinabalu: A Malaysian rescue team searched for victims of a Christmas Day storm that hit the eastern state of Sabah and killed at least 109 people, mostly Indonesians, and left as many missing. A Government minister said it was the worst disaster to affect the country. (Reuters)

Pray now, pay later

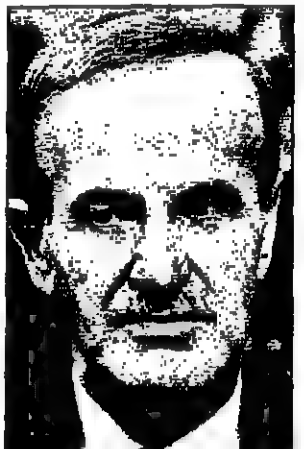
Madrid: A church in northern Spain has scrapped its traditional collection plate in favour of a credit card machine for contributions after Mass (Tunku Varadarajan writes). The system was installed yesterday at the church of San Claudio, in León.

Assad 'exiles brother over illegal activities'

PRESIDENT ASSAD of Syria has exiled his younger brother, Jamil, to France because he engaged in illegal activities, according to a Kuwaiti newspaper, al-Rai al-Amin.

The paper, citing "very well-informed" diplomats in Paris, said yesterday that Jamil's family and close friends had been forced to join him in France.

Jamil owned a shipping and a trading firm. He and his sons were involved in "a number of illegal activities in Syrian seaside towns". His son-in-law, who heads a state construction company, was fired, the paper said. (AFP)



Assad: had complaints from businessmen

Rebel 'messengers' held after leaving Lima siege

FROM GABRIELLA GAMINI IN LIMA

TWO suspected Tupac Amaru rebels were arrested in Lima yesterday after apparently leaving the besieged Japanese Ambassador's residence "hidden" among a group of freed hostages.

One apparently left with 225 hostages on Sunday, and the other escaped on Christmas Day. Police said they had been sent out as messengers to rebels outside the building.

Earlier, Japan called for help from leaders of the Group of Seven industrialised nations — Britain, Canada, Germany, France, Italy, America and Japan — to solve the hostage crisis, in which 103 people are at the mercy of 20 terrorists who have explosives strapped to them.

Yukihiko Ikeda, the Japanese Foreign Minister, said it was a "matter of course" that the international community agree not to tolerate terrorism. It was necessary to co-

operate to achieve a peaceful release of the hostages as soon as possible.

The G7 responded with a communiqué issued in France, saying the countries were "prepared, individually and collectively, to help the Peruvian Government by using all the appropriate means that it could request".

Among those facing their eleventh day in captivity in Lima are Morihisa Aoki, the Japanese Ambassador, 30 Japanese businessmen and Peruvian government and security officials.

Mr Ikeda's request backed a call made earlier by President Yeltsin for the G7 nations to agree on a joint plan to

solve the crisis. But he ruled out Mr Yeltsin's offer of sending a Russian anti-terrorist squad to storm the residence, which is considered Japanese territory.

The last to be freed was José María Argueta, the Guatemalan Ambassador, on Thursday. It was a gesture to mark the end of a 36-year-old civil war in the central American country.

The rebels also freed the Uruguayan Ambassador a day earlier, after a court in Montevideo released two suspected Tupac Amaru terrorists who had been accused of kidnapping businessmen for ransom in Uruguay. The apparent deal struck by the

stand-by for action when required.

There has been a flurry of releases since the takeover, but they all seem to be part of a wider tactic by the terrorists.

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A member of the rebel coalition group seeks support before the peace treaty is signed

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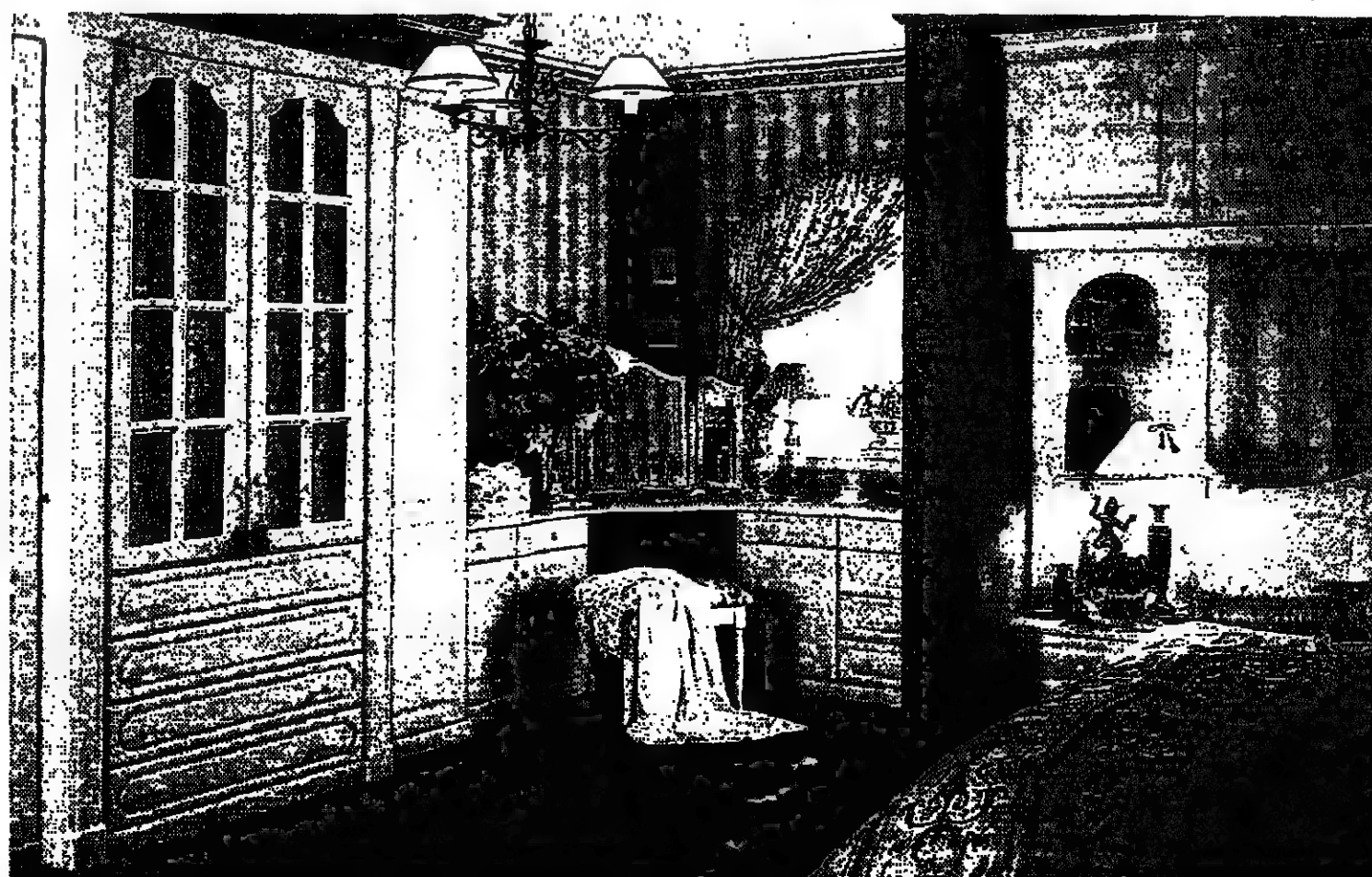
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Human brain 'warned of quake tremors'

By AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE IN SYDNEY

HUMAN brains can detect pre-quake tremors which seismologists cannot, according to two Australian radiographers.

They say that corrupted images shown on a computer-aided tomography scan of a psychiatric patient taken 17 minutes before a fatal earthquake wrecked the New South Wales town of Newcastle in 1989 were caused by a pre-quake tremor undetected by seismologists.

"If you really nail it down it is the first ever demonstration of a pre-quake tremor by non-seismological means," Lindsay Rowe, one of the radiographers at the Newcastle hospital, said yesterday.

The quake, measuring 5.5 on the Richter scale, struck the city, 100 miles north of Sydney, in December 1989 at 10:28am. Twelve people died and hundreds were injured.

Mike Grayson, the hospital's chief radiographer, was conducting the scan at 10:00 am. The Medical Journal of Australia reported that he noticed unusual streaks appearing on scans taken at 10:11 am. The scan was completed at 10:20 am.

The earthquake struck eight minutes later, destroying the scanning room but leaving the patient and staff unscathed.

In the journal's December issue, Mr Grayson says: "We believe the corrupted images were caused by a pre-quake tremor that was undetected by seismologists."

Mr Rowe said it could be argued that the brain's reaction was similar to the instinct in many animals that alerted them to natural disasters before they happened. "If I ever saw that image on a screen again, I'd be the first out of the building."

Opposition did win Serbia poll, say monitors

By PETER CAPELLA IN GENEVA AND OUR FOREIGN STAFF

THOUSANDS of anti-government protesters danced and sang in the centre of Belgrade yesterday to celebrate after an Organisation for Co-operation and Security in Europe (OSCE) fact-finding mission backed opposition claims that it had won recent local elections.

However, the demonstrators then clashed with riot police after jeering at them as the protest broke up. Witnesses said the cordons of police, some in plain clothes, used batons in street fights.

At least one person was beaten unconscious and a man who said he was walking home from a medical conference received a head-wound, witnesses said. A mother and her daughter, aged 12, were caught in the skirmishes and slightly injured. Two foreign television crews were attacked and had cameras smashed.

A reporter from the independent Radio Index said: "It seems riot police are intervening in response to jeering. No other provocation took place."

Felipe Gonzalez, the former Spanish Prime Minister, representing the OSCE, confirmed opposition victories over President Milosevic and his ruling Socialist Party in a series of disputed municipalities, where the results were annulled by Serbian courts.

He said that official electoral acts, signed by all political forces in Serbia, clearly stated that the Zvezdno opposition coalition had won in 13 towns as well as in nine districts in Belgrade.

"It is my opinion that both the authorities and all political forces in Yugoslavia must accept and abide by the results of the local elections of November 17," he said in a statement issued in Geneva.

He dismissed the subsequent cancellation by Serbian courts of the results in municipalities won by opposition candidates as invalid. "The tribunals accepted allegations to cancel the elections that no

democratic country could have accepted." He added that it was also clear that the ruling Socialist Party and its allies won the majority of votes in the election as a whole.

Mr Milosevic, who invited the OSCE mission to Belgrade a week ago, was expected to respond early next week in time for a full meeting of the 55-nation security alliance in Vienna. Señor Gonzalez called on the organisation to issue an urgent appeal to the Yugoslav authorities to uphold the poll and to engage in dialogue with the Opposition.

As the announcement was made, about 80,000 demonstrators defied a police ban and gathered in Belgrade for the 38th day in succession. They danced and cheered the report, which added weight to mounting international demands that Mr Milosevic respect democracy.

"This is a big test for Milosevic. If he rejects this opinion, he will return to the greatest isolation of the past three to four years," Zoran Djindjic, a senior opposition leader, said. However, he added that he did not expect the Serbian President to accept the findings. "We expect further escalation, aggravation of this political crisis."

Weeks of processions through Belgrade ended on Thursday when police with body armour, helmets, shields and truncheons cleared the streets, forcing demonstrators back into a pedestrian square. Police also curtailed yesterday's celebrations, preventing students from marching through the streets. Instead the pro-opposition protesters walked in circles pretending to be prisoners, blew trumpets and whistles and chanted slogans.

Clashes between the two sides on Tuesday left at least 58 people injured and two dead. One man was seriously wounded after he was shot in the head by a government supporter.



Students show identity cards to Belgrade riot police as they defy a ban on marching yesterday

Britons among 28 held on barge

FROM REUTERS IN LAGOS

TWENTY-EIGHT foreigners, including two Britons, ten Filipinos and nine Frenchmen, are being held hostage on a barge offshore in south-eastern Nigeria by 60 Nigerian workers demanding wage increases, a Philippine diplomat said yesterday.

"It is the fifth day today. They have been there since December 23 and there are ongoing negotiations to resolve the situation," Hermes Dorado, consul-general of the Philippine embassy in Lagos, said.

The dispute involves a French oil services company identified as NTPM that employed the workers on its barge, the WB-82, which transports crude oil from onshore fields to tankers.

The other hostages are five Indians, one Lebanese and one Belgian. They have not been named. The Nigerians on the barge did not appear to be armed, Mr Dorado said.

"So far they are safe and unharmed despite the passing yesterday of a deadline by the Nigerian workers who said things will happen if their demands were not met by then," he said. The vessel was being held about 30 miles offshore from the oil-producing town of Eket.

Mobil Nigeria Unlimited, a joint venture with the US firm Mobil Corp, is the main producer of crude oil in that area, but its staff were unavailable to comment yesterday because of public holidays. Mr Dorado said the Filipino crew sent an urgent message to Manila for help.

Christmas loses its glitter for troops on last post at Chinese border

FROM JAMES PRINGLE IN HONG KONG

FOR Corporal Justin Gratton there was very little festivity during this season to be merry. The 24-year-old from Stoke-on-Trent was on duty at the Nam Hang observation post, gazing over the forbidding fence into the border city of Shenzhen in China.

Asked how he had enjoyed Christmas, he responded:

"What Christmas? Christmas did not happen in 1996."

British troops of the First Battalion, Staffordshire Regiment, are deployed along the Chinese border at five observation posts in Hong Kong's New Territories. Their duty is to log what they see, or "patterns of life". But the exercise seems rather pointless given that Hong Kong reverts to Chinese rule at midnight on June 30, 1997.

"We were in Northern Ireland before this... that was exciting," said Corporal Gratton. "But this is boring work, just standing up here for 12 hours at a stretch seeing what they do - and it is the same every time." Seemingly surprised, he added that the Chinese did not celebrate Christmas - it was just another day for them.

On a bridge across the murky Shenzhen River, where once a huge red billboard

declared "Down With the US Imperialists and All Their Running Dogs", a Chinese poster now shows a well-groomed golfer at the Mission Hills golf course. Close by, a digital clock counts out the days until July 1, and a poster in English states: "Hong Kong will be a better place in 1997."

The border, once a tense place, is now more relaxed. "Sometimes the Chinese police or army wave to us from the

other side," Corporal Gratton said. He and his three companions are on a four-day stretch of duty here. "We always wave back - after all, you have to think of public relations."

In his Christmas message to the British garrison, Major-General Bryan Dutton, Commander, British Forces, Hong Kong, said he was saddened at the continuing running down of the garrison. "We now have

to look ahead to the last lap and up the tempo again." There were new challenges, he added, including the arrival of advance parties of China's People's Liberation Army and the final pullout.

The Staffords have a long connection with Hong Kong - their publicity handout recalls how they fought in the 1941-42 Opium War. On this last five-month tour in Hong Kong they are unaccompanied by

their families. When they leave in February, the Black Watch will take over until the handover. They will arrive with a large pipe band to exit the colony in style.

The Staffords' commander, Lieutenant-Colonel Jim Tanner, said: "We are fortunate to be here in this 'show the flag' role. Our mission is to be a fairly visible sign of British sovereignty up to the handover."

MORNING GOSSIP

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The man who would be King of Morocco has forsaken the nightclub life for the burden of state

Hassan's heir prepares to take reins of power

MARRAKESH FILE

by TUNKU VARADARAJAN



HEIRS to the throne should not necessarily be envied in serious monarchies. The Prince of Wales, when he becomes King one day, will inherit not just the British Crown but also a host of burdensome comparisons with his mother, the Queen.

The wise King of Spain, Juan Carlos, will also leave his Prince Felipe to a devilishly difficult act to follow. Both these cases, however, pale into insignificance when compared with the next instalment in the kingdom of Morocco — Mamlaka al-Maghribia, to use its official Arabic name — when Crown Prince Sidi Mohammed should succeed the tireless and titanic King Hassan II.

The Alaouite dynasty has ruled Morocco since the 17th century. Directly descended from the family of the Prophet Muhammad, its rulers boast the purest bloodline in the Islamic world.

The prince, who will be King Mohammed VI when he ascends the throne, will inherit a kingdom quite unlike its counterparts elsewhere in the

world. After 35 years on the throne, his father has constructed a weird and magic monarchy, where a paternalistic absolutism coexists with the kind of independent opposition found in no other Arab kingdom.

Little, however, is known about the prince. When the 67-year-old King Hassan fell seriously ill with a bout of pneumonia in New York last November, the world's press scrambled chaotically to put together a portrait of the Crown Prince, the man who would be King. It is rumoured that his grandfather saved his father's life: so paralysed by panic were the court physicians that only the prince had the presence of mind to send for an ambulance.

Aged 33, Prince Sidi Mo-

ammed has so far led a life shrouded in deliberate mystery. Extraordinarily, it is not even known whether he is married or not. What is certain, however, is that he is better prepared to rule his kingdom than most crown princes will ever be. He has a graduate degree in international relations from a French university — his thesis was on "The Co-operation between the European Union and the Maghreb"; he speaks English and Spanish in addition to the customary Arabic and French. He has shadowed his father carefully in the corridors of power.

Yet recently he has stepped out of that shadow, travelling abroad on his father's behalf to France, the Middle East, and the United States. On his

visit to the latter, he met both President Clinton and Al Gore, the Vice-President, although he failed to secure an appointment with Madeleine Albright, the new US Secretary of State whose forthright views on the Western Sahara question have never been to the Moroccan Government's taste. Analysts, however, detect a greater role for Prince Sidi Mohammed in the handling of that long-running dispute, and he is believed to have exchanged views, through intermediaries, with leaders of the Polisario Front. Equally, the prince has adopted a lifestyle more in keeping with his new-found role. He has ceased visiting Rabat's nightclubs, where he was once known to enjoy youthful diversions, and reflects the gravitas of an active crown prince.

His main task now is to win the confidence of his father's courtiers, none of them natural modernisers. If he does so, he will secure a smooth transition — when, at long last, he takes the throne in Morocco.



Prince Sidi Mohammed, on his father's right, at an event in Rabat this year

Kingdom hopes to have world at its feet

IF MOROCCO has its way, the football World Cup will come to the kingdom in 2006.

Boasted by the success of its professionals in the main European leagues, and consistently at the top of African football tables, the country has made a bid for the game's premier competition. France is to host the Cup in 1998, and Japan and South Korea will do so jointly in 2002.

"That means," a spokesman for the Moroccan Football Federation said, "that Africa has to have the Cup in 2006. The continent has never hosted the competition, and we think Morocco offers the best facilities of all."

MOROCCO's main forest, the Mamora, is in danger of disappearing in less than 50 years, according to environmentalists.

The forest, which consists principally of cork-oaks, lies to the north of the capital Rabat, and has long served as the city's "lungs".

Yet the pressures on the Mamora grow daily, with peasants plundering firewood and clearing the forest for farmland. At present, only 24,700 wooded acres remain, compared with its surface area of more than 148,200 acres 40 years ago.

China and Russia to cut border forces

By RICHARD BEESTON

RUSSIA and China yesterday agreed to reduce the military forces along their common border, as part of a wide range of bilateral agreements to improve ties between the former Communist rivals.

President Yeltsin and Li Peng, the visiting Chinese Prime Minister, agreed to pull back ground troops from one of the most heavily militarised frontiers in the world. Details of the deal were not released and will probably not be until President Jiang Zemin of China visits Moscow in April for a summit with the leaders of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, the former Soviet republics that also share a border with China.

China's 2,700-mile border with the former Soviet Union became a tense frontier when relations with Moscow broke down in the mid-1950s, leading to bloody clashes between the two sides in the 1960s. The bilateral deals agreed yesterday included the sale of Russian warplanes to China as well as ambitious plans for oil and gas pipelines to China. Apart from economic co-operation, Peking and Moscow are also keen to forge closer political ties.

Lebed launches third political party

FROM RICHARD BEESTON IN MOSCOW



Lebed: attacked Yeltsin's fitness for presidency

ALEKSANDR LEBED, Russia's former security chief, launched a new political party yesterday and set the stage for a fresh clash with the Kremlin, after accusing President Yeltsin of being unfit to hold office.

Two months after he was fired by the Russian leader for insubordination as national security adviser, the ambitious former paratrooper said he wanted to give Russians a fresh choice with his new Russian Popular Republican Party.

"The 'third way' will be an alternative to both the Communists and the current democratic elite since both are alien to the people," General Lebed told about 150 delegates representing 72 Russian regions at a two-day gathering

outside Moscow. "A third party will make the bureaucratic elite respect the interests of society and state."

Earlier, in an interview with the *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* newspaper, he said Mr Yeltsin was too sick to fulfil his duties properly and the country had been plunged into crisis by incompetent aides. "I know perfectly well that Boris Nikolayevich [Yeltsin] is a very sick person," said the general. "The President's resignation would be a normal, civilised way out of the situation... [he] must rest himself at his dacha and care for his grandchildren."

The attack, coming only days after the Russian leader formally returned to work after nearly six months' absence, appeared to signal that

General Lebed intends to establish himself as Mr Yeltsin's main opposition challenger.

Certainly the language used by General Lebed suggested that there will not be any reconciliation between the two men, who briefly joined forces to defeat the Communists in last July's elections.

Yesterday General Lebed predicted that the country was heading for a crisis in the spring and he ruled out any talk of a return to Mr Yeltsin's staff, saying: "I will never be a bureaucrat, my spine is not rubbery enough."

The former security chief, who succeeded in resolving the Chechen conflict during his brief tenure in office, said his new party would be a centrist movement that would campaign to amend the constitution and

diminish the authority of the president.

Experts are divided on whether General Lebed has the political stamina to remain a key figure in Russian politics until the next presidential elections in 2000. They are agreed, however, that the formation of an effective national grassroots political movement is vital if the headstrong former boxer, who is regarded as the most popular politician in Russia today, hopes to gain real political power.

In the last presidential race he came third behind Gennadi Zyuganov, the Communist Party candidate who has the only well-organised political party in the country, and Mr Yeltsin, who had unlimited funding for campaigning and

France pulls out of new air patrols over northern Iraq

FROM ADAM SAGE IN PARIS

FRANCE yesterday withdrew from the air reconnaissance operation aimed at safeguarding the Kurds in northern Iraq, in a move likely to anger the United States but please President Saddam Hussein.

The French Foreign Ministry said it would not participate in the new, slimmed-down version of "Operation Provide Comfort", which comes into force next week, because the aims of the mission had changed.

Paris said the operation, established after the Gulf War five years ago, had ceased to be "humanitarian" since Saddam had agreed with the United Nations that 30 per cent of all aid for Iraq should be earmarked for Kurdish areas.

"The new operation is essentially one of air surveillance," said Anita Limido, the Foreign Ministry spokeswoman, who announced the end of French involvement. However, France's partners will suspect Paris of trying to court Saddam for a share of his oil revenue.

Washington has urged President Clinton to continue to support the United States, Britain and Turkey in their attempts to stop Iraqi planes flying over Kurdish areas in

the north. The French move follows a spate of recent disputes between France and the United States that began when Paris objected to Kofi Annan's nomination as UN Secretary-General. Relations deteriorated further when M. Chirac asked America to abandon its command of Nato forces in southern Europe.

The *al-Thawra* newspaper, an organ of the ruling Baath party in Iraq, said: "The French move will enhance ties with Iraq by boosting comprehensive relations that both sides are willing to bring back to their past level."

French harbour fond memories of Mitterrand

By ADAM SAGE

THE burning ambition of François Mitterrand to be remembered as one of France's greatest Presidents has achieved some success.

Nearly a year after his death on January 8, he is rated as a popular and effective head of state who did much during his 14 years in office to improve France's standing in the world, according to an opinion poll published today.

The poll, for the weekly *Figaro* magazine, shows Mitterrand's compa-

triot's have largely forgiven or forgotten his failures and foibles. They bear no grudge over his sympathies for the collaborationist Vichy regime or his extramarital affairs. The findings come amid a flood of biographies which testify to the fascination that he still excites in France. At least five works will be published this month.

More than 30 per cent of respondents say he was the best President of the Fifth Republic, second only to his erstwhile rival, Charles de Gaulle. Jacques Chirac, the incumbent, comes bottom of the poll.

Three-quarters of the respondents see Mitterrand's attempts to forge European union as the most significant aspect of his term in office. Surprisingly, the French are also tolerant of his domestic policies, which economists say are to blame for the present difficulties. By lowering the retirement age, shortening the working week and extending social security, he left France uncompetitive and facing high taxes.

Although an overwhelming majority condemn his action to combat unemployment, 57 per cent approve of

his costly welfare reforms — a finding that underlines the dilemma the present Gaullist administration faces as it tries to rein in public spending.

The most unexpected answer came in response to the question — "How do you remember the Mitterrand years (1981 to 1995)?" Then the French would have, with typical Gallic pessimism, pointed to the sleaze that dominated his second seven-year term. Now, 65 per cent have good memories of this era, with just 35 per cent discontented. This prompts *Le Figaro* to say that "he is greater dead than alive".

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THEATRES

ADRIAN

"ANDREW LLOYD WEBBER'S

MASTERSHIP" Wed 9 Journal

WINNER OF 7 TONY AWARDS

SUNSET

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■ 1996

... was the year in which Sir Richard Rogers unveiled his Millennium Dome for Greenwich



■ 1996

... and the year in which Sir Simon Rattle announced that he was leaving Birmingham

THE TIMES ARTS



■ 1996

... was notable for rows about the corrupting effect of tacky films like *Showgirls*



■ 1996

... but also an *annus mirabilis* for that one-man musicals industry, Andrew Lloyd Webber



The most exuberant musical event of 1996: in November some 2,845 schoolchildren, plus instruments, gathered for a morning in Birmingham under the charismatic direction of Sir Simon Rattle to form the world's largest orchestra

Cheers, tears, and a lot of hot air

If the arts are supposed to stimulate debate, 1996 was a vintage year. We argued about everything, from medieval caskets to pop musicals. Sometimes the arguments were more fun than the art we were arguing about. Sometimes the art never actually happened, but we had the arguments anyway.

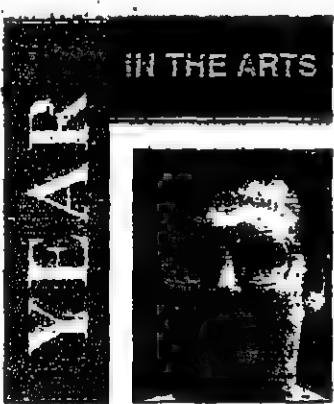
Mostly, the arguments weren't over money — which is fairly amazing for Britain. They were over that dreaded word, *taste*. Whose taste should prevail when the outcome affects us all? That question certainly lay behind the big arguments about the future look of London.

Sir Norman Foster's cross plan for a 94-storey office block that would loom over St Paul's Cathedral like a mugger over an old granny was widely abhorred. So was Daniel Libeskind's accident with a Rubik cube, otherwise known as his design for the V&A's Boilerhouse. And a rum lot of designs for a visitation "inhabited bridge" over the Thames found little favour with anyone except card-carrying modernists.

The jury is still out on Sir Richard Rogers's gargantuan Millennium Dome proposal for Greenwich. But that is not the main thing holding back the planned millennium jollies. There are worries about the rocketing budget, implausible deadlines, unknown exhibition content, leaderless management, inadequate private finance and uncertain political backing. Apart from that, it's all going well.

We argued a lot in 1996 about our palaces of culture. The British Museum responded to criticism by threatening admission charges. The Royal Academy was revealed to have a £3 million deficit and some impressionistic accounting procedures, at least in the past. The Royal Opera House, in an unwise burst of glasnost, let BBC cameras roam freely: the candid footage added greatly to the nation's gaiety but did little to muster support for its accident-prone redevelopment scheme. Still, at least Covent Garden hasn't been torched by the Mafia, as is now believed to have happened to Venice's La Fenice opera house.

The sale of great works of art also proved to be a fertile source of dispute, particularly if it involved a transfer across national boundaries. A vigorous campaign, led by this newspaper, kept the Thomas & Becket casket in Britain. But the director of the Getty Museum in California, still smarting at having Canova's *Three Graces* snatched from his grasp, accused the British Government of "bending" its own export licence rules, and



arguments in the arts world were rather more entertaining than the shows themselves

If foreign buyers couldn't be guaranteed a fair deal. With the Greeks again agitating for the return of the Elgin Marbles, and demands in Europe for the repatriation of works of art that were looted during the Second World War, the question of how far a country can lay claim to its "national heritage" looks set to keep armies of lawyers, diplomats and art experts very profitably employed for decades.

After taking only a couple of years to think about it, the Arts Council set up several schemes to pour lottery money into creative arts programmes rather than building projects. One scheme, *Arts for Everyone*, removed all quality controls from little groups applying for small grants. Amateurs have never had so much money thrust upon

them; we shall expect dazzling costumes from the local operatic society next year.

Perhaps the Arts Council's new concern about "the grassroots" was a sign of guilt. A report revealed that 700 times more arts lottery money had been spent, per head, on Londoners than on the people of Bedfordshire.

What else did we argue about? Pornography and violence, naturally. The Robert Mapplethorpe exhibition at the Hayward Gallery produced less hot air than his homoerotic snaps had done in America. But a series of tacky films — *Kids*, *Showgirls*, *Strange Days* and *Crash* — were given much more publicity than their quality merited. When will politicians learn that the quickest way to quadruple a bad film's audi-

ence is to call for it to be banned?

Some lively disagreements in 1996 were unspoken: the critics would damn a show; the public would respond by queuing round the block to see it. Thus does Cliff Richard's *Heathcliff* continue its triumphant progress round Britain. Nowhere was this dichotomy more apparent than in the film world. The more the critics raved about *Breaking the Waves*, Lars Von Trier's intense study of marriage difficulties in the Outer Hebrides, the more the public flocked to see *Independence Day* and *Twister*. Funny, that.

Still, the critics did exert some influence. Sir Cameron Mackintosh closed the much-panned musical *Martin Guerre* after a few months, had it rewritten, and relaunched it in a better version. It takes courage to do that after you have spent six years and £3.5 million on a show.

And while we are handing out awards for boldness, let's salute Professor George Steiner. He ended his keynote speech at the 50th Edinburgh Festival with the suggestion that the festival abolish itself. "To know when to stop is a rare but vivid mark of honesty within excellence," said the prof, to muted applause.

Doubtless Sir Simon Rattle would agree with him, though his decision to quit the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra will leave a huge hole in Brum's cultural life. Rattle's charisma was nowhere better displayed this year than when he presided over the "world's biggest orchestra": 2,845 children gathered in Symphony Hall for the most exuberant (if not the most polished) performance of the year.

But it was Sir Andrew Lloyd Webber's *annus mirabilis*. *Cats* became the longest-running musical ever on Broadway or in the West End. *Jesus Christ Superstar* was revived at the garishly refurbished Lyceum. *By Jeeves*, a flop 21 years ago, was revised, restaged, and instantly reborn as yet another Lloyd Webber hit. *Joseph*, plus dreamboat, returned. *Whistle Down the Wind* — Lloyd Webber's version of an ancient Hayley Mills movie — opened in America to warm reviews. And then came the film of *Evita*.

The only irritating cloud on the great man's horizon was a plagiarism case in America. And Lloyd Webber even ended this in profit, winning precisely \$78.09 in damages by counter-suing a songwriter who had sued him. Every little bit helps.

So was it a good year for British culture? On the whole, yes. The critics about falling

ever, particularly from theatre folk. Yet Sir Peter Hall, inaugurating his "last big project before I hang up my clogs", announced six new plays and much else for the revitalised Old Vic. The reconstructed Globe mounted a promising "prologue" season. Cam-

bridge's Arts Theatre and Oxford's Playhouse reopened after sumptuous refurbishments. A £42 million concert hall opened in Manchester. And Cardiff announced that its new opera-house project was not, after all, dead — merely disguised as the

"Wales Millennium Centre". One of the world's finest conductors, Christoph von Dohnányi, has been lured to the helm of the Philharmonia Orchestra. A witty, all-male version of *Swan Lake* is running commercially in the West End. The Prime Minister has

proclaimed London "the coolest city on the planet". And the publisher Macmillan feels optimistic enough about our supposedly philistine age to bring out a 34-volume *Dictionary of Art*. There is hope for serious culture. Or at least room for argument.

If your bed is ten years old or more, then you've been together too long.



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need for a good, healthy night's sleep. Lack of quality sleep will blunt your appetite and enthusiasm for everyday living.

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Sean French reflects on the pressures, pitfalls, and the pittance of a reward he got, after collaborating on a novel with his wife

Rich writers are pure fiction

An old Greek said that you should call no man happy until he is dead, which is a bit late to be of much use to the man in question. I can supply a more serviceable observation. You cannot truly say you love, or even like, someone until you have either (a) shared a house with them, (b) gone on holiday together, or (c) collaborated on writing fiction. X may be beautiful or witty, but what will you think of them when they finish the milk or never do the washing up?

Or, to be frankly autobiographical, how will you react when you hand a chapter of your novel over to your wife and, as she reads it, you hear the clatter of her keyboard, and the occasional mutter of "she wouldn't do that" or "that doesn't make sense"?

After W.H. Auden had briefly and disastrously collaborated with Benoit Brecht on a version of *The*

Duchess Of Malfi, he concluded that Brecht was the only person he had ever met who justified the existence of capital punishment. When my wife, Nicci Gerrard, and I collaborated on writing *The Memory Game*, we had some cross words, long silks and tortuous remonstrations, but we never quite got to that stage.

From the start, we agreed about the sort of book we wanted to write. Victoria Wood has a joke about how, when she finds herself in W.H. Smith, she can't resist picking up a book at the last chapter to see what doesn't happen. Whatever else we thought we could achieve, we

wanted to provide the sort of reader satisfaction and excitement that we ourselves craved.

The story would have a murder in it, and it would end with the solution, with twists and misdirections along the way. We found a theme that intrigued us: the recovery of hidden memories. In the United States it has broken up hundreds of families and sent many people to prison convicted of crimes alleged to have been committed years, or even decades, earlier.

We constructed a detailed chapter-by-chapter plot and began to write separately (our one attempt to write together resulted in precisely

one sentence and a prolonged row). The peculiarity of the collaborative process is that we surprised ourselves from then on.

As well as creating a crime story, we found ourselves writing a story about our shared obsessions: about the idea of family with its enticements and betrayals; about memory and the way we interpret the past in order to justify ourselves.

If there is a single reason that this novel has been published under a joint name, it is that when *The Memory Game* was finished, we were almost alarmed by its difference from what either of us could have produced on our own.

When Rob Lowe, the ex-teen

movie star, once notoriously videoed himself having sex with two young girls, and the videotape was stolen and widely copied, the comedian Arsenio Hall commented: "At last, Rob Lowe has made a film that everybody wants to see."

I know how Lowe must have felt. In a way we went through a similar, if more welcome, surprise. For more than a year, *The Memory Game* was our secret. We were protective of it until it was completely finished. Then we tentatively started to ask other people to take a look. They weren't just enthusiastic about it, they saw it as a product, something that could make money.

Let me put this in perspective. I've published various books, both fiction and non-fiction. This has been satisfying in various degrees, but my earnings from them were, at best, comparable to those of the man who washes the windows of your house and, at worst, comparable to those of the man who washes the windscreen of your car when you stop at traffic lights.

To put it further into perspective, for the two-book contract Nicci and I signed with Heinemann, we were paid proportionately much less than the £1 million Martin Amis has just been paid for four books. Let alone the £500,000 he was reportedly paid for *The Information*. But our advance was nice all

the same: about the amount that Amis would have got if he had been paid according to what *The Information* sold.

Yesterday a journalist asked whether, as somebody who had published well-reviewed literary novels, it wasn't a problem to be regarded as somebody who had written a popular book which was considered to be a commodity, to be used as part of a large marketing campaign, to be compared with writers such as Jeffrey Archer and John Grisham.

It was an interesting question and required an equally scrupulous answer. I thought hard and then replied with all the intelligence and sincerity I could muster. No, it wasn't.

The Memory Game is published by Heinemann at £2.99

Waiting on the outside world

Rachel Campbell-Johnston assesses hopes for peace in Latin America

The Guatemalan Ambassador to Peru, José María Argüeta, is the latest high-profile hostage to be released from the besieged embassy in Lima. It is a gesture that provides an important recognition of the peace process currently being completed in Guatemala. Today, in the National Palace in Guatemala City, President Alvaro Arzú signs the final document of an accord that marks the official conclusion of a 36-year civil war with leftist guerrillas. For Tupac Amaru rebels, in search not simply of the release of prisoners but also of an eventual role for their movement in Peruvian politics, Guatemala provides a possible template for the way ahead.

Like Peru, Guatemala is a nation that has scarcely known tranquillity since Spain's conquistadors colonised it about 500 years ago.

The division between the descendants of the Spaniards and the Indians has never been blurred. For centuries, the indigenous people have been despised — and killed. Guatemala may be sold to tourists as "the land of eternal spring", but its verdant hills and dramatic volcanoes have enfolded scenes of poverty and massacre. A succession of military dictatorships has crushed any semblance of democracy.

An attempted coup by leftist Army officers in 1960 was savagely repressed. A rebel movement, made up mainly of Mayan Indians, was born. Guatemala found itself plunged into one of the bloodiest civil conflicts in all Central America. Over the past 36 years, more than 100,000 people have been killed, and as many driven into exile. It is this which President Arzú now puts to an end with the signing of a ceasefire and agreements providing for constitutional reforms, demilitarisation and rights for indigenous people. It is apt that left-wing Peruvian rebels should recognise the political importance of Guatemala's model.

Yet Guatemala's path into the future will not be easy. Its people have watched a peace process crumble along for too long, and broken too often, to believe that President Arzú's signature can change a nation so long pinched between an entrenched elite and the savagery of a lawless army. Many believe that the signing of these accords is simply a show of hands, the price Guatemalans must pay for foreign aid.

The cessation of armed conflict provides no simple solution. It has been many years since the guerrilla movement was a viable military force. Crushed by a US-backed Government, its numbers have fallen below 1,000. What Guatemala

la hopes to gain is the sense of security that breeds lasting democracy and lays the ground for more equitable economic organisation. The balance needs to be redressed in a land in which the majority survive on maize tortillas cooked on wood stoves, while the rich fly private planes to Miami to do their weekend shopping. A withered judiciary and frail Civil Service need to be rebuilt from scratch.

The dismantling of a headstrong paramilitary state is crucial in a country where the army's power has too long gone unquestioned. But the introduction into society of youngsters nurtured in a climate of civil war will not be easy.

Already, the country is lapsing into undisciplined violence. If the volcanoes that ring Guatemala City appear beautiful, veiled with bright flowers at the end of the rains, to

walk their steep paths is to risk robbery and rape. When I visited the city, my host seemed surprised I had made it to the airport to his flat unharmed.

Land reform, too, will prove difficult. Though former guerrilla movements may argue that private property should be redistributed, the Government relies on landowners for political support. The seizure of territories to which indigenous peoples may claim some historical right could

be redistributed, the Government relies on landowners for political support. The seizure of territories to which indigenous peoples may claim some historical right could spawn a conflict more vicious than the guerrilla fighting and proposals to approve an amnesty for those who committed atrocities during the civil war, threaten attempts at reconciliation. There is anguish at the prospect of human-rights groups and relatives of victims who want a truth commission similar to South Africa's to bring to justice those accountable for killings, kidnappings and torture.

A way forward has been sketched for Guatemala, but no clear map has been drawn. Agreements have, many say, been thrown together too quickly. As a Quiché Indian chewing tobacco in Chimaltenango put it, "Beans take a long time to stew. If you cook them too quickly, the insides remain raw. Everyone gets indigestion. But maybe that's better than hunger."

Guatemala's real struggle is only just starting. The country has a potentially prosperous economy. Its people are dynamic and entrepreneurial. Already, small farmers have proved themselves inventive, diversifying to capture non-traditional markets for snow peas, sesame or shrimp. President Arzú shows signs of heading a clear-thinking and decisive government. To win the war, he will need all the help the outside world can afford.

To the glory of God and art

Treasures which lie undisturbed in English country churches are equal to those of Tuscany

Most churches have light and dark moods. Last week I watched the one turn to the other as a December evening closed in on Highnam Church outside Cheltenham. For a moment the late sun blazed through its Victorian glass, throwing shards of colour on to darkening walls. Trees swaying in the wind outside broke the sun's beams and drove the colour furiously back and forth across the nave. Soon all was black.

Then we turned on the lights and a quite different church sprang to life, a theatre of Gothic revival created by the Victorian aesthete Gambia Parry and dedicated to the Holy Innocents as memorial to his wife and children, dead of tuberculosis.

He filled it with frescoes, screens, statues, paintings and carved wood, ordering that the enormous cost be kept secret from him by his architect, Henry Woodyer, and his bank manager (not a practice recommended today). On the night of its consecration in 1851, Parry entertained 700 guests at Highnam Court. As they ate he slipped away alone into the night to place a bust of his wife in the church.

The spire still rises over Parry's landscape, waited on by a grizzled guard of oak yew and monkey puzzle, the old school, lodge and personage all intact. Two years ago Parry's great-grandson, Tom Fenton, restored his ancestor's masterpiece as one of few wholly unaltered works of the period. Highnam is a glory of the Severn valley. I doubt if one reader in a thousand has ever heard of it.

This month my search for England's best thousand churches (other than cathedrals) completed Gloucestershire. The county may not quite match Somerset or Norfolk, but what it lacks in depth it makes up in variety and surprise. The county is really two, if not three, regions. The "Chilnashire" plateau of the Cotswolds from Bath up to Chipping Campden has a wild and regal air, of great manors and an appropriate aristocracy of churches. At Cirencester and Chipping Campden, Fairford and Northleach, the grandees of English Perpendicular tower over the undulating uplands. In the late 15th century, while the Roses made war, the Cotswolds made money, much of it spent on churches. Legend claims that a dozen Campden men became Lord Mayors of London.

The wool boom gave us the medieval glass of Fairford, the Grevel brasses at Campden, the "teardrop" tracery at Lechlade and the unsurpassed porches at



Tewkesbury Abbey, with reputedly the largest Norman tower in Europe. Inside, the columns of the nave rise like trees in an enchanted forest

Cirencester and Northleach. Porches are to Gloucestershire what towers are to Somerset. From the three-storey structure overlooking Cirencester market, wool merchant guilds conducted business and charity from what must be England's first office block. Northleach's wool was famous from the leas of Steyney to the weaving houses of Flanders. Its superb porch, equalled only by that of St Mary Redcliffe in Bristol, was the Rialto of the Cotswolds.

Up on the hills the churches are all Perpendicular light, tall conservatories of silver stone and ribbed glass. Beyond and below lies the Severn Vale, from Tewkesbury down to Berkeley. It is almost a different county. Beyond, the Forest of Dean might be a different country. Bristol's Andorra lost between England and Wales. The Forest should mint its own stamps.

Here the churches are still dark shrines, founded by Saxon missionaries, rebuilt by the Normans and not much altered since. This architecture is older and more varied. It is dominated (Gloucestershire apart) by the mighty keep of Tewkesbury, with reputedly the largest Norman tower in Europe. Inside, the round columns of the nave rise like tree-trunks in an enchanted forest to a floral canopy of liernes and coloured bosses. Tewkesbury's Gothic tombs are thickets of Perpendicular ornament, once stained with the blood of Yorkists and Lancastrians. They butchered each other even in the abbey nave, where the monks stripped the bodies of armour and used it to cover the vestry door.

Around Tewkesbury lie humble Norman ministers and chapels, at Deerhurst, Hailes, Bishops Cleeve and, over the Worcestershire border, Ripple and Brecon. Deerhurst is so isolated on the bank of the Severn that we could imagine the early Benedictines rowing upriver with their Saxon masons to plunder Roman villas for stone and tiles.

They fixed angels and madonnas with Byzantine faces high on the facades of their churches. Across at Kemley they fixed frescoes in the damp plaster in the Italian manner. Here is a Romanesque chance with a complete set of 12th-century murals — some of the oldest in

Britain until last week's discovery of 11th-century work in Norfolk. Located in Tuscany, such a church would enjoy a permanent jam of expatriate Volvos. In Gloucestershire it sits lost in the hills between the Malverns and the Wye, a masterpiece in a field, undisturbed by fame.

Beyond Kemley and deep in the Forest of Dean is Newland church, the "cathedral of the Forest". Its tower rises over the surrounding trees while its nave shelters the spirits of the woods. They take the form of a stone knight: a "Forester of Fee" named Wyrtall, his hair in plaits, his hunting horn and knife at his side, a bowman in his hat and raven of all a medieval coalminer, complete

with pick, and a candle in his teeth. These are more than just religious treasures, they are the relics of a living community.

Some of Gloucestershire's most appealing churches are tucked into the lee of the Cotswold escarpment. They were not the ostentatious chantries of wool magnates but congregations of yeoman farmers. At Stanton and Buckland the naves were furnished as their patrons would have done their parlours, cosy rooms of dark wood and wainscoting, with space for hats, sticks, dogs and children and perhaps a bottle of port under the seat.

Above on the slopes lie hidden the chapels of the shepherds and drovers on whose backs the "wool-sack" of England rested. The beautifully incised Norman vault at Elskstone conceals a chancel roof that doubled as the priest's dovecot. At Dunstbourne Rouse, the west front butts into the hillside while the east raises itself over a secret crypt. I once found a sheep inside and expected drovers to stomp into the nave, gusts of leaves sweeping after them and coating the pews with autumn.

For three centuries after the Reformation the churches of Gloucestershire rested on their laurels. Victorian revivalism was merciful, sparing them the fate visited on much of Yorkshire. At Selsey, G.F. Bodley commissioned William Morris and his friends to design a set of Pre-Raphaelite windows. The result is to find on the slopes outside Stroud a gallery of Burne-Jones, Madox Brown, Webb and Rossetti. At Daylesford, J.L. Pearson built a French Gothic casket for Harman Grisewood and

for the tomb of Warren Hastings. In gloomy weather it is as gorgeously sinister as a Hollywood mortuary.

A medieval museum the size of Cluny's in Paris could be filled with the treasures of Gloucestershire churches. It would take the Romanesque capitals at Leonard Stanley, of Adam and Eve and of Mary giving birth to Jesus. It would take the jesting gargoyles at Wincombe leering down at the townspeople below. It would take the alabaster tombs in Berkeley Church, hands and faces so pure they glow in torchlight. It would take the Sabbatarian mural in Ampney St Mary's, a ghoulish warning to villagers that Christ's wounds will spout blood if they dare to use their worktools on a Sunday. Yet no museum should ever be filled in this way. Gloucestershire's collection is where it should be, dispersed among the people whose craftsmanship and devotion brought it to life.

In this county of contrast, my most vivid impression has been not of one church but of two. Opposite the north facade of Tewkesbury Abbey runs a medieval alley with a row of Georgian windows. Inside is one of England's earliest Baptist chapels, dating from the 1650s. Its fittings are simple, with pulpit and baptistry in the centre, and with a small chamber upstairs with a fireplace for the minister.

In a hundred yards we pass from one of England's mightiest churches to one of its humblest. Here is architecture singing in every register, here in glorious Gloucestershire.

Simon Jenkins

Britain until last week's discovery of 11th-century work in Norfolk. Located in Tuscany, such a church would enjoy a permanent jam of expatriate Volvos. In Gloucestershire it sits lost in the hills between the Malverns and the Wye, a masterpiece in a field, undisturbed by fame.



Isabella Rossellini: true story

and there were broken pans, plates and cups everywhere.

Mr Lee had been too assiduous in stuffing the bird. When he crammed in the sage and onion, he didn't notice his watch slip off into the turkey's midriff. In the heat of the oven, it's battery exploded and Christmas dinner went with it — to the glee of his Labrador Zoe. "She had a whale of a time licking up all the pieces."

Isabella Rossellini, so rudely dismissed from her lucrative contract with the make-up and perfume company Lancôme for being too old, has a chance to get her own

back. The daughter of Ingrid Bergman and Roberto Rossellini, she is to write her autobiography which is due in 1997 for the American publishing house Knopf. A perfect opportunity to lay into those less-than-gallant purveyors of face paint.

Bar none

WHEREVER John Prescott is on New Year's Eve, you can guarantee he'll be enjoying himself. His party hat was firmly on at the Christmas bash of *The New Statesman*, where he combined a love of champagne with an unchanged drinking style that owes nothing to the mineral-water-slipping tendency of new Labour.

The magazine's boffiny editor, Ian Hargreaves, approached Prescott late on in the proceedings. He opened his mouth to speak at the very moment that Prescott's assistant, who had been dispatched to the bar to replenish the boss's glass, returned to his side. The glass was empty. Time had been called at 9 o'clock on the button, and the bar was being dismantled. "Right, let's find somewhere else where we can find some more of this stuff," granted Prescott who marched into the night and left Hargreaves gawping like a goldfish.



"I picked it up in the sales"

While the hubbub in the Labour Party surrounds the appointment of press aide Alastair Campbell's partner Fiona Millar to look after Cherie Blair in the run up to the general election, it appears that Norma Major is not to be chaperoned by a spin doctor. Eileen Wise, head of news at Central Office, who trailed in Norma's footsteps during her book tour, has been switched to work as campaign sidekick to Charles Lewington, director of communications.

P.H.S

In the soup

WITHIN the past 18 months, he has married off three daughters with aplomb: one to Crown Prince Pavlos of Greece; another to a third of the Getty fortunes; and a third to the European aristocrat Alex Von Furstenberg. But Robert Miller, the Hong Kong-based duty free tycoon, is still paying his dues.

The man who wheeled his way into Britain's barbour set with the recent purchase of Earl Peel's Yorkshire grouse moor for £9



Alexandra: change of mind

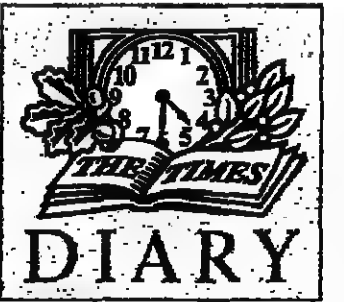
million is being sued on account of the New York reception party which followed the wedding of his daughter Alexandra to Von Furstenberg.

Premier Party Servers, a company which provides staff, is suing for £250,000 because 200 of its waiters were cancelled just a week before the party. A woman's pre-emptive it may be to change her mind, but the company takes a less romantic view. "In eight years of business, I've never had anybody pull out so late," said Marc Levine, the company's owner. "I'm sure they want to do the right thing."

The build-up was fraught. Just days before the wedding, Alexandra, 21, went off the caterer Glorious Food and turned to Harry Cipriani, a restaurant favoured by her parents. Within days, she had changed her mind again — forcing Cipriani to cancel Levine's 200 waiters and inviting a law suit. Wedding guests have been subpoenaed.

Hummbug

THIS Christmas in The Netherlands a wife became so enraged



with her husband's carol singing that she grabbed a knife and plunged it into his chest. The 55-year-old, who was due to appear in court yesterday, told police that she tolerated her spouse singing *Silent Night* for several hours before her patience snapped on Boxing Day. The husband is recovering in hospital, humming quietly to himself.

Clubbed

SHEER bafflement is the mood at the Royal St George's golf club in Sandwich, Kent, occasional home of the British Open and the place where Ian Fleming, once club captain, imagined James Bond playing against Goldfinger. The club secretary has issued members with an extraordinary letter announcing an increase in subscription fees. It is in language comprehensible only to

the steeliest of MBA-trained minds. Section three is a cracker: "The subscription for those members who were previously in either the over 120 miles category (40 per cent of basic subscription) or the overseas category (25 per cent of basic subscription) and who will now be in the 121-300 mile category (60 per cent of basic subscription) will be based on 50 per cent of the basic subscription in 1997 (£350) and 60 per cent of the basic subscription in 1998."

They must be taking the mick, said one senior member. "Or they think we are so stupid we will just pay up regardless. But we've got some of our top men on this. Once they have worked it out, there'll be hell to pay."

Time bomb

IN A MODEST house in Halifax on Christmas Day, guests had to make do with chicken tikka pizzas after the 22lb turkey blew up in the oven. Chris Lee, a hypnotist by profession, was opening presents next door when he heard the blast from the kitchen.

"I walked into the room and it was just a scene of devastation," he explained. "Bits of turkey were all over the walls, ceiling and floor. The oven door was hanging off, things had been blown off the walls



MANIFESTO PROMISES

Ideas alone are not enough, leadership is required

Writing by instalments helped Charles Dickens to immense popularity, whether it can do the same for the Prime Minister is less certain. John Major's plan to float sections of his manifesto over the coming weeks has a certain daring to recommend it. The plan suggests a confidence in the capacity of ideas to secure the loyalty of voters who might be inclining towards the Conservatives for economic reasons. Ideas, alone, however, are not enough. The electorate will require of the Conservatives not just a tantalising prospectus of fibits for a fifth term but a sense of purpose, and vision — in short, leadership.

The reservoir of regard for Mr Major is deeper than it seems when viewed from Westminster. Admiration for his personal qualities was reflected in the imperfect, but symbolic, *Today* programme Personality of the Year poll. But Mr Major's administration has often lacked the authority, the capacity to shape events and dictate to circumstance, which is the mark of leadership.

The publication of a series of new policies as winter turns to spring provides a late, perhaps last, opportunity to take the initiative. The hints so far do not, however, suggest a Government with the radicalism to enthuse jaded voters nor the certainty on Europe required to dramatise momentous issues of sovereignty. The possibility of privatising child adoption is a welcome deregulatory measure but, compared to the other social reforms which any Government must contemplate, it is thin gruel. The plan to issue vouchers to every citizen to equip them with information technology training is almost Wilsonian in its techno-gimmickry. A party serious about skills should be contemplating the introduction of a fully voucher-based education system.

In the absence of dramatic new thinking

on policy, a robust assertion of core principles becomes all the more important. The case the Conservatives are developing on constitutional reform could be powerful. Lord Cranborne, the Leader of the House of Lords, has argued persuasively that the pace of economic change required to remain competitive is such that broad constitutional stability is all the more important. The Tories have, however, been handicapped communicating their message.

The Government has lacked a single figure who speaks with authority on the constitution in the language of the saloon bar. Too many cooks have been stirring the scotch broth. The Tories would do well to have a single spokesman to speak on constitutional affairs across the United Kingdom, such as the increasingly impressive Welsh Secretary, William Hague.

The second weakness is the inability to oppose threats to the constitution which come from Europe with the same certainty which is directed against domestic opponents. The Government has deliberately maintained a position of studied ambiguity on the single currency to strengthen its negotiating hand but diplomacy's gain has been Dr Mawhinney's loss.

A host of Conservative candidates will make their personal opposition to a single currency embarrassingly clear in their election addresses. They calculate that it is the only straightforward sceptical signal they can send the voters. Some Tory strategists believe the damage done by dissent on such a scale might be limited by suggesting any Commons vote on a single currency would be a free vote. Unfortunately, such a strategy is more likely to smack of expediency than firm Government and without firmness the Tories will find it all the more difficult, in a few short months, to remain in Government.

RECONNAISSANCE MAN

Five hundred years ago: Italian navigator, English sponsor

Echoing the celebrations which marked the 500th anniversary of Christopher Columbus's voyage across the Atlantic, Italy will next year remember another explorer, John Cabot. He may even be recalled as John Caboto, for little is certain about his life, including the spelling of his name. It would be absurd for modern nation states to be quarrelsome about 15th-century explorers who were quite indifferent to nationality and to passports. But before the ceremonies commence, may we shed a small shaft of light on Cabot's non-Italian career?

That is, of course, most of his known life. That such an explorer was born in Genoa and held Venetian citizenship was hardly a coincidence. The two north Italian ports were, in the language of the 20th century, the hubs of Mediterranean transport infrastructure. Venetian and Genoese merchants, fixers and adventurers travelled the length and breadth of the known world, weaving elaborate networks between Alexandria, Catalonia, Constantinople and London. Venice and Genoa were to their time what the Federal Express headquarters in Memphis, Tennessee, or the container terminal at Rotterdam are to our age.

From this busy junction came the men of what one historian calls the Age of Reconnaissance. They were hard-headed, practical navigators whose principal interest in extending the boundaries of the known world lay not in expanding human knowledge but in acquiring land and valuables. Cabot worked for a Venetian merchant and then moved to London, perhaps because he thought it the best base from which to seek a sponsor. He had perhaps already, and independently of Columbus, reckoned that a long voyage east might reveal unknown land. He moved to Bristol and had perhaps

heard tales of voyages to "Vinland", probably Newfoundland, by Viking seafarers. In the 1490s, two or three ships each year were reported to have left Bristol for the western Atlantic; they may have fished the Grand Banks or even have reached the mainland.

Cabot thought that he was looking for Asia: the conventional wisdom of the day held that the earth was smaller than it turned out to be and that a new trade route to China could be opened by sailing west. The reconnaissance man went in search of sponsors like today's trekkers who want to cross the Sahara or the Arctic. Cabot had probably made presentations of his budding plans in Lisbon and Seville as well as London. Goaded by news of Columbus's landfall in the Caribbean, England's Henry VII granted letters patent to Cabot and his sons in 1496; they were required to return their goods to Bristol but could have a monopoly of any trade they found.

Cabot may have lacked finesse as a manager. The first voyage failed for lack of food and because of disputes with his crew. He set out again and on the morning of June 24, 1497, the "Matthew" made landfall. Like so much else, the exact spot remains disputed: it could possibly have been Cape Breton Island, perhaps Labrador, but it was probably Newfoundland. A Genoese mariner, with an 18-strong west country crew had found the oldest of what later became the British Dominions. One historian thought that this moment five centuries ago was the first moment at which could be discerned "the outline of England's future role in the world as a country exercising a predominant influence in the British Isles, closely knit to the Continent of Europe, but also impelled by the spirit of commercial and maritime adventure to vast enterprises beyond the ocean."

SUN KINGDOM

We are not undermined

The Grimaldi dynasty may be among the oldest royal families in Europe but Monaco's first family also stars in glamorous modern soap opera. Their present worries include abdication rumours, divorce, paparazzi and a princess who suddenly went bald. The one thing that the ruling family of Monaco do not have to worry about is the legitimacy of their rule. Allegations about the human frailties of the late Princess Grace have not dimmed the lady's fairy-tale allure for her subjects. A daisy chain of scandals and disasters involving unsuitable boyfriends, illegitimate children and failed careers do not seem to have dented local loyalty to the Princess's daughters, Caroline and Stephanie.

Conventional opinion tut tuts at the damage which Prince Rainier's children are supposed to be inflicting on the House of Grimaldi. But the monarchs of Monaco represent the last, pure essence of royalty. Unfettered, boundary-free public behaviour is impossible even for members of royal families elsewhere in the democratic world. In the era when the Grimaldis first seized the lordship of Monaco 700 years ago next year, kings and princes sought no one's opinion or approval of their personal behaviour. The idea that monarchs must obey earthly rules is more modern than monarchy itself.

The Grimaldis are now conducting a

unique constitutional experiment to see whether a completely uninhibited monarchy, not required to be in any way wise or useful, can survive on the brink of the 21st century. This bold empirical research alone is a reason to celebrate seven centuries of survival as the crowned heads of what Somerset Maugham called "a sunny place for shady people."

One can hope, for other reasons, that the Grimaldis will mark more anniversaries. An entire sector of the global magazine publishing business is kept alive — and countless jobs for photographers, caption writers, and designers created — by the knowledge that there will always be some royal misbehaving in Monaco. For the French republican state next door, Monaco fulfils an important psychological function as a virtual monarchy: supplying non-stop regal entertainment unavailable in Paris at no cost to the French taxpayers. Serious crime is hardly known, in spite of a recent influx of Russian businessmen of mysterious antecedents and unexplained assets. The nearby mafia-ridden city of Nice should be so lucky. With a population smaller than Leamington Spa, a territory which would fit inside Central Park and flowerbed frontiers, Monaco could easily merge into France. But its tax-free citizens prefer to keep their hereditary rulers. Aristocracy's allure does not depend on seemingly conduct.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

1 Pennington Street, London E1 9XN Telephone 0171-782 5000

Effectiveness of a single currency

From Professor Sir Graham Hills

Sir, One does not need to be much of an economist to observe that most of our commercial activities are rapidly being globalised. The world markets now implies world markets. Standards imply global standards.

The necessary procedures to play a significant role in these developments include collaboration, partnerships and joint ownership. Economic independence seems an unwise stance, indeed a lost cause, soon to give way to interdependence and greater economic security for us all. That way lies peace, equity and the global rule of law.

In these circumstances it is difficult to see a future for national currencies and other local units of measurement. These can at best lead to confusion, and at worst to gerrymandering which, in the case of money (pace Miss Adrienne May's letter, December 21), has steadily devalued the pound sterling and my earnest efforts to earn a living.

Could we therefore, without more ado, get on with rejoining the EMU and adopting the commonest currency so far.

Yours faithfully,
GRAHAM HILLS,
Sunnyside of Threepenny Wood,
Laigh Threepenny Wood, Beith, Ayrshire.
December 23.

From Mr John Evert

Sir, The letter from Miss May citing the differences in various currency exchange rates over the past 30 years is, of course, of little relevance in itself. What matters is the purchasing power of the various currencies, as the result of inflationary fluctuations in the different countries, over the 30 years.

In my view the real relevance of her letter is that it reminds the reader that a single currency can only be achieved with single economic control over the whole of the community.

Her conclusion, asking why we should entrust our Government with control of our economy, begs the question of whom she would prefer to control our economy.

Yours faithfully,
JOHN EVETT,
High View House,
Rue de la Bonne Fleur,
St Andrews, Guernsey, CI.
December 21.

Shades of Vichy

From Mr John Redwood, MP for Wokingham (Conservative)

Sir, Julian Critchley's letter today misjudges which politicians have the scent of "Vichy defeatism" in their nostrils. It is not those of us who wish to keep this nation as a self-governing democracy. It is rather those Liberal and Labour politicians who would give this country away, passing control of our economy and money to the unelected officials of Frankfurt and Brussels. Opposition to them is the way to victory, not to disaster.

Yours faithfully,
JOHN REDWOOD,
House of Commons.
December 21.

Future of Royal Yacht

From Mr Don Paterson

Sir, Having read the letter from the joint chairmen of the Greenwich Britannia Project (December 17), I look forward to the decommissioning of the Royal Yacht, which should be sold off to the highest bidder on the understanding that absolutely no lottery money is given to support any future project involving this vessel.

Nor should any public funds be given to construct or run a replacement but, if business concerns are foolish enough to pay for a new Royal Yacht, that is fine.

Yours faithfully,
D. R. PATERSON,
31 Byron Road,
Selsdon, South Croydon, Surrey.
December 17.

Gulf War illness

From Earl Baldwin of Bewdley and others

Sir, In all the coverage about Gulf War illness and questions to Ministers it seems to be overlooked that it has been the House of Lords that has been the running, in the person of the Countess of Mar. Her relentless questioning over a period of years has forced the present concessions and has earned her the respect of all sides of the House.

We think credit should be given where it is due.

Yours faithfully,
BALDWIN OF BEWDLEY,
BRIDGES,
CHALFONT,
HYLTON-FOSTER,
KINLOSS,
SLIM,
TENBY,
BERNARD WEATHERILL
(Convenor, crossbench peers),
House of Lords.
December 18.

Letters to the Editor should carry a daytime telephone number. They may be sent to a fax number — 0171-782 5046.

Case for returning Elgin Marbles

From Mr Peter Spring

Sir, You make an eloquent and reasonable case in "No Elgin, no marbles" (leading article, December 21) for retention in the British Museum of the Parthenon frieze and pediment sculptures. Unfortunately you have ducked completely the most serious question: what happens if circumstances change as the result of the introduction of charging for entry to the museum?

If, due to what one can only assume is unstated government policy, access to the marbles requires payment, is not the case for retaining them fatally weakened?

Yours faithfully,
PETER SPRING,
155 Elms Crescent, SW4.
December 21.

From Mr Martin Hasseck

Sir, Your first leader today is specious. You state, correctly, that "Many now see Lord Elgin as a thief..." and the sculptures as stolen goods that should be given back to their rightful Greek owners". The rest of the leader is irrelevant. They should be returned.

Yours faithfully,
M. HASSECK,
104 Holders Hill Road, NW4.
December 21.

From Mr Zachary Goldring

Sir, The British Museum has pieces of the Parthenon and the Greeks, understandably, would like them back. Not a photograph, not a copy, but the original inimitable marble carvings.

If your arguments were followed

The risk business

From Professor Emeritus L. E. J. Roberts

Sir, Dr John Adams (letter, December 17) argues that averaged values of risks of death or injury are a poor guide to decisions that must be taken by an individual. But statistics can be refined to be more useful.

To take his own example: a young man who realises that he is 100 times more likely to die in a road accident than a middle-aged woman, and that violence claims more lives than disease in his age group, may be persuaded to take more care of his car, his driving and his behaviour. He has a right to know what risks he runs.

Further, averaged risk statistics are of value in comparing risks to society as a whole, and in establishing trends over a period of time. For example, mortality in middle-aged men in England and Wales in 1988 due to heart attacks was over three times that in France and nearly six times that in Japan. Are we satisfied that our record is improving rapidly enough?

Wider publication of risk statistics

Legal paperwork

From Mr John Brindley

Sir, The report (December 18) on the number of forms required to prosecute a young person for an act of violence (the figure of 46 was mentioned) again raised this important issue.

Significantly, the vast majority of defendants plead guilty in magistrates' courts, which means that the standard assault file submitted by the police to the CPS need only include crucial witness statements and about six essential documents: the young person's details; a charge sheet; the police view as to why a prosecution is appropriate; the defendant's previous record; the victim's claim for compensation; and a short note of the police interview with the defendant.

These new abbreviated file stan-

Top-up fees

From Mr G. Ashley

Sir, To ensure survival it may be necessary for universities to charge top-up fees (report, December 13) but the effect on the student mix will be severe. The decline in the grant and the ever-increasing loan burden which a student has to bear are already restricting choice of university and course to those obtainable near the parental home, so as to save on maintenance costs.

The imposition of a top-up fee, even though accompanied by generous provision for remission, will only reduce further the proportion of young people from poor homes applying to enter universities.

Those undertaking higher educa-

South Atlantic links

From the UK Representative of the Falkland Islands Government

Sir, The Argentine Ambassador (letter, December 18) overlooks the main stumbling block to the resumption of normal relations between the Falkland Islands and Argentina. He knows that the people of the Falkland Islands would welcome both a neighbourly relationship with Argentina and the prospect of Argentines being able to visit the islands, but that such circumstances are simply not acceptable to the Islanders whilst Argentina continues to lay claim to the Falklands.

We have always sought a state of peaceful coexistence with Argentina and have welcomed the progress that

the Sphinx could be adequately restored by having a plaster beard attached to it (the original of that item also being in the BM). To their credit, the Egyptian authorities have declined to mar their ancient monument in such a manner.

The only real argument in the BM's favour is, why should it return national treasures until similar repositories across the world agree to do the same? Currently there seems little likelihood of this happening.

As for the rest of your leading article: Bah, humbug!

Yours truly,
ZACK GOLDRING,
2 The Fern,
Larkfield, Aylesford, Kent.
December 22.

From Mrs Margaret E. Stewardson

Sir, Since, as you point out, the expertise is now available to produce excellent reproductions, why should there not be a complete replicated sequence of the Parthenon frieze in London, and the originals be returned to Athens?

Yours faithfully,
MARGARET E. STEWARDSON,
77 Burford Road,
Witney, Oxfordshire.
December 23.

From Mrs Maria Hattersley-Smith

Sir, Would the Scots have welcomed back a copy of the Stone of Scone?

Yours faithfully,
M. HATTERSLEY-SMITH
(née Kefallinou),
The Crossways, Cranbrook, Kent.
December 22.

should be welcomed. Arguments about their interpretation, will assist public understanding and "the optimum apportionment of our resources and lead eventually to a healthier, safer society.

Yours faithfully,
LEWIS ROBERTS,
Penfold Wick, Church Hill,
Chilton, Didcot, Oxfordshire.
December 18.

From Professor Emeritus Felix Weinberg, FRs

Sir, Surely we already have the "simple measure of risk" called for by the Royal Statistical Society and Nigel Hawkes (Mind and Matter, December 9). It's called, "How much does it cost to insure against it?" The unit, being the pound, is universally understood and the assessment is presumably accurate, since in general it is carried out by people whose livelihood depends on getting their sums right.

Yours faithfully,
FELIX WEINBERG,
59 Vicarage Road, SW14.
December 17.

dards were recommended by independent consultants, approved by an efficiency scrutiny and agreed early this year by the Trials Issues Group, which promotes improvements in procedures in the criminal justice system and comprises representatives of its main agencies, including senior police officers. Police forces are in the process of implementing the introduction of these new files.

In the minority of cases where young persons plead not guilty additional witness statements may be required, but usually the number of forms included in a prosecution file need not increase dramatically.

Yours sincerely,
J. F. BRINDLEY
(Chairman), Trials Issues Group,
Room 710, 50 Ludgate Hill, EC4.
December 20.

tion cannot all expect better career prospects than their peers. In your article on August 20 it was made clear that this only applied to the product of a small number of universities. The great majority will have to take their turn in the employment queue — and repay large loans for what might turn out to have been a dubious benefit.

Government should think again about financing universities if it does not wish to see them the sole preservers of the comfortably-off. But perhaps it does?

Yours faithfully,
G. ASHLEY
(Registrar, London School of Economics, 1968-84),
15 Birch's Nook Road,
Stockfield, Northumberland.
December 14.

their young democracy has made since 1982. However, their claim to the islands was written into their Constitution as recently as 1994 and, as such, represents a continuing threat to the security and wellbeing of the islanders.

Far from "widening the divide" as Ambassador Pfitzer suggests, the islanders are merely seeking Argentine acceptance of British sovereignty over the islands on a permanent basis so that what he calls "the dark hours of 1982" are never repeated.

Yours faithfully,
SUKEY CAMERON,
Falkland Islands Government,
London Office,
Falkland House,
14 Broadway, Westminster, SW1.
December 19.

New year plea for London's walkers

From Mr Stephen O'Brien

Sir, Many Londoners and visitors to the capital will have noticed the resurfacing work currently being carried out on Horse Guards Parade adjacent to St James's Park. The lack of cars both on Horse Guards Road and the Parade has made the area quieter and considerably enhances the view towards Whitehall from the park.

As thoughts turn to new year resolutions, I have one for London. We should resolve to improve the environment for walkers. Let us start by closing off both Horse Guards Road and the parade permanently to cars and then rejoin the park and the parade as originally designed. At the same time let us give all the encouragement we can to Sir Norman Foster and Westminster Council to come up with exciting improvements both for Trafalgar Square and Parliament Square.

Let 1997 be the year of the pedestrian.

Yours faithfully,
STEPHEN O'BRIEN
(Chief Executive),
London First,
Caxton House, 6 Tothill Street, SW1.
December 18.

Royal parks cuts

From Dame Jennifer Jenkins

Sir, The way the Department of National Heritage has carved up its budget shows that he who shouts loudest gets most. London's Royal Parks, which have no shouter, will next year suffer a £1.5 million cut in budget of £23.2 million, making a reduction of over 12 per cent in two years.

The Royal Parks Agency was set up only in April 1993, when the ground works were contracted out. Apart from the Royal Parks Constabulary, it has a very small management team, and unlike some other organisations has limited opportunities for revenue earning.

Perhaps the consultative committee set up to help the agency should be given an independent chairman (as the Royal Parks Review Group recommended) rather than a civil servant who can only whisper.

Yours faithfully,
JENNIFER JENKINS
(Chairman, Royal Parks Review Group, 1991-96),
2 Kensington Park Gardens, W11.
December 26.

So that's all right

From Mr Shaun W. Thorpe

Sir, Fear not: plum pudding and mince pies are not illegal ("Pudding hatters find relief in law", December 23). This canard is regularly resurrected in the Christmas silly season. There is no such 17th-century statute of Cromwell on the statute book.

As for the "Christmas Act of 1448" requiring "traders to empty their windows on Christmas Eve", this is probably a reference to the Sunday Fairs Act 1448, which was repealed in 1969, as was the Act of Uniformity of 1531 requiring church attendance over Christmas.

Yours faithfully,
SHAUN W. THORPE,
53 Willow Vale,
Shepherds Bush, W12.
December 23.

From Mrs Jacqueline Toms

Sir, I believe that Christmas puddings and mince pies can be eaten without fear of imprisonment. According to Sir George Clark in the Oxford History of England:

None of the acts [of Cromwell's Parliament] which would normally have required the participation of the King could be regarded as valid.

Therefore Cromwell's legislation is, in the main, no longer operative.

Yours faithfully,
JACQUELINE TOMS,
1 Locke Gardens,
Langley, Slough, Berkshire.
December 23.

Jazz scores

From Mr Michael Webber

Sir, Your jazz critic is in error if he thinks the Park Lane Group presented the first jazz concert in the Queen Elizabeth Hall in 1973 (Arts, December 18).

I cannot remember what happened in the States but I presented my first Louis Armstrong anniversary concert (with a galaxy of British talent) in that hall on July 4, 1970, a Louis Armstrong memorial in 1971 and several others before 1973.

Yours sincerely,
MICHAEL WEBBER,
The Garden Flat,
19 Netherhall Gardens, NW3.
December 18.

Looking back

From Mr John Merrett

Sir, You report today that John Major has been named as personality of the year 1996 in a poll conducted by the BBC *Today* programme.

I refuse, Sir, to believe that 1996 was that bad a year.

Yours faithfully,
JOHN MERRETT,
24 Broadless Park, Devizes, Wiltshire.
December 27.



COURT CIRCULAR

YORK HOUSE
ST JAMES'S PALACE
December 28: The Duke of Kent, Colonel, was represented by Colonel John Clavering

at the funeral of Colonel Murray of Klee, Scots Guards, which was held at Torosay Church, Isle of Mull, this afternoon.

Forthcoming marriage

Mr C.M. Mackendrick and Miss S. Mackey
The engagement is announced between the son of Mr and Mrs Kerry Mackendrick, of Lochwinnoch, Renfrewshire, and Susan, daughter of Mr John Mackey and Mrs Ursula Mackey, of Sacramento, California. The marriage will take place in Los Angeles, California, on June 7, 1997.

Latest wills

Frank Tyldesley, of Llandudno, Gwynedd, left £2,798,666 net.
Philip William Ralph Pope, of West Stafford, Dorchester, Dorset, left £1,520,254.
Mary Angela Robinson, of Oxted, Surrey, left £1,508,329 net.
She left £1,000 to All Saints Catholic Church, Oxted Building Fund.
Bertie Sidney Woolough, of Framlingham, Suffolk, left £1,243,342 net.

Anniversaries

TODAY
BIRTHS: Alexander Keith Johnston, geographer, Penicuik, 1804; Samuel Phillips, journalist, 1814; Thomas Woodrow Wilson, 28th American President 1913-21, Staunton, Virginia, 1856; Pio Baroja y Nessi, novelist, San Sebastián, Spain, 1872; Sir Arthur Eddington, astronomer, Kendal, Cumbria, 1882.

DEATHS: St Francis de Sales, Doctor of the Church, 1622; Queen Mary II, reigned with King William III 1689-94, London, 1694; Pierre Bayle, philosopher, 1706; Thomas Babington Macaulay, 1st Baron Macaulay, poet, historian and statesman, London, 1858; George Gissing, novelist, St Jean de Luz, France, 1903; Maurice Ravel, composer, Paris, 1937; Theodore Dreiser, novelist, Hollywood, 1945; Victor Emmanuel, King of Italy 1900-46, Egypt, 1947; Jack Lovelock, surgeon, Olympic 1500m gold medalist 1936, killed in an accident, New York, 1949; Paul Hindemith, composer, Frankfurt am Main, 1963.

The Tay Bridge collapsed, 1879.
The first weather reports relayed by wireless telegraphy were published in London, 1904.

The Peak District was designated Britain's first national park, 1950.

TOMORROW
BIRTHS: Charles Macintosh, pioneer of waterproofing, 1951.

Glasgow, 1766; Andrew Johnson, 17th American President 1865-69, Raleigh, North Carolina, 1808; William Ewart Gladstone, Prime Minister 1868-74, 1880-85, 1892-94, Liverpool, 1809; Pablo Casals, cellist, Vendrell, Spain, 1876.

DEATHS: Thomas à Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, 1170; Thomas Sydenham, physician, London, 1689; Brook Taylor, mathematician, London, 1731; Jacques-Louis David, painter, Brussels, 1825; Charles Lamb, essayist, Edmonton, Middlesex, 1834; Christina Rossetti, poet, London, 1894; Sir William Osler, physician, Oxford, 1919; Rainer Maria Rilke, poet, Valmont, Switzerland, 1926; Elyn Phillips, novelist, Broad Chyn, near Exeter, 1960; Paul Whitman, band-leader, Doylestown, Pennsylvania, 1967; Maurice Harold Macmillan, 1st Earl of Stockton, Prime Minister 1957-63, Sussex, 1986.

Radio Luxembourg began broadcasting, 1930.
The Irish Free State changed its name to Eire when the new constitution was implemented, 1937.

German planes dropped 10,000 bombs on London, 1940.

The first transistor hearing aid went on sale in America, 1951.

A coelacanth, a prehistoric fish believed to be extinct, was caught off the coast of South Africa, 1952.

BMDS: 0171 680 6880
PRIVATE: 0171 481 4000

Take heart, my children. Cry out to God and he will answer you from the power of your names. Baruch 4: 21

BIRTHS

WILSON - On December 28th at the Portland Hospital, a son, Nicholas, to Mrs. Caroline (nee Foster) and Mr. John Wilson, a brother for India.

BALCH - On December 28th at the Portland Hospital, a son, a beautiful daughter and a son, to Mrs. Margaret (nee Balch) and Mr. John Balch, a brother for India.

WATSON - On December 28th at the Portland Hospital, a son, a beautiful daughter and a son, to Mrs. Margaret (nee Watson) and Mr. John Watson, a brother for India.

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Weekend birthdays



Noel Johnson, radio's original Dick Barton, special agent, is 80 today; Bernard Cribbins, the actor, will be 68 tomorrow

TODAY:
Air Commodore Molly Allott, former director, WRAF, 78; Mr W.A. Camps, former Master, Pembroke College, Cambridge, 86; Mr D.B. Carr, former cricketer, 70; Miss Madeleine Craggs, secretary, Imperial Cancer Research Fund, 51; Mr T.W. Gould, VC, 82; Mr Max Hastings, Editor, *Evening Standard*, 51; Mr Roy Hattersley, MP, 64; Professor F.P. Kelly, FRS, statistician, 46; Mr Nigel Kennedy, violinist, 40; Mr Martin Llewellyn, chairman, Transport Development Group, 61; Mr Michael J.P. Marks, deputy chairman, Merrill Lynch International, 55; Mr Michael Marland, educationist, 62; Mrs Frances Morrell, former leader, ILEA, 59; Sir Patrick O'Connor, former Lord Justice of Appeal, 82; Mrs Bridget Prentice, MP, 44; Mr Simon Raven, author and dramatist, 69; Mrs Joan Ruggie, MP, 53; Dame Maggie Smith, actress, 68.

TOMORROW:
June Marchioness of Abernethy, 37; Baroness Denton of Wakefield, 61; General Sir Robert Ford, 73; Mr Andrew Foster, controller, Audit Commission for Local Authorities and the NHS in England and Wales, 52; Professor L.C.B. Gower, former Vice-Chancellor, Southampton University, 83; Mr David Hall, former Chief Constable, Humberside, 66; Sir Simon Hornby, president, Royal Horticultural Society, 62; Mr Terry Lewis, MP, 61.

Mr Martin Offiah, rugby league player, 30; Mrs Rosalind Preston, former president, National Council of Women of Great Britain, 61; Mr Peter Robinson, MP, 48; The Right Rev Mark Sanner, Bishop of Birmingham, 60; Sir Kenneth Sharp, accountant, 70; Mr Harvey Smith, showjumper, 58; Mr Jon Voight, actor, 58; Sir Edward Williams, former commissioner-general, Expo 88, Brisbane, 75.

Church services tomorrow

First Sunday after Christmas

BELFAST CATHEDRAL 10.11 HC: 3.30

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OBITUARIES

GWILYM LEWIS

Gwilym Lewis, DFC, First World War fighter ace, died on December 17 aged 99. He was born on August 5, 1897.

In a series of letters home which are sustained masterpieces of understatement, Gwilym Lewis conveyed with graphic simplicity the realities of the life of a fighter pilot in the years 1916-18. The letters, sent to his father from France where he served successively with 32 and 40 Squadrons, are extraordinary examples of the boyish reticence which characterised the young fighting men of the period.

The deadly grapple with the enemy in the thin air at high altitude over the Western Front is treated almost with matter of factness. Death — often a matter of protracted agony in those days before the parachute permitted escape from a stricken or burning aircraft — takes place as yet another item on the agenda of daily squadron life. "The ninth [of the squadron's pilots to be killed] was Godlee... He crashed well on our side of the lines and died soon after. He was a pukka Anzac and a jolly good fellow," Lewis observes matter-of-factly, as aerial combat steadily thins the ranks of No 32 Squadron in the summer of 1916, in spite of the technical superiority enjoyed by the Royal Flying Corps over the German Air Force at that juncture.

Unlike his elder brother Edmund, who was shot down and killed while taking on five German fighters in December 1916, Gwilym Lewis was to survive to serve in the Second World War and enjoy a ripe old age. But though he retained an intense interest in aviation all his life and became life president of 32 Squadron, he never flew again. Towards the end of his wartime flying career in 1918 the letters do finally betray the immense strain of non-stop combat. And although flying had been Lewis's life since he had passed his civilian pilot's licence on a Graham White Box Kite in 1915, he elected not to remain in the fledgling RAF at the end of the war; thereafter his career was in the City.

Gwilym Hugh Lewis was born in Birmingham of Welsh parents. His mother was a from a clerical background but his father was in insurance. When Lewis was five the family moved to Crofton and he went to Whitgift Grammar School and then to Marlborough.

When war came he volunteered to join the Northampton Regiment and was commissioned as a second lieutenant. But, by his own account, he found life in the infantry irksome and applied to join the Royal Flying Corps. The RFC's current intake was full and



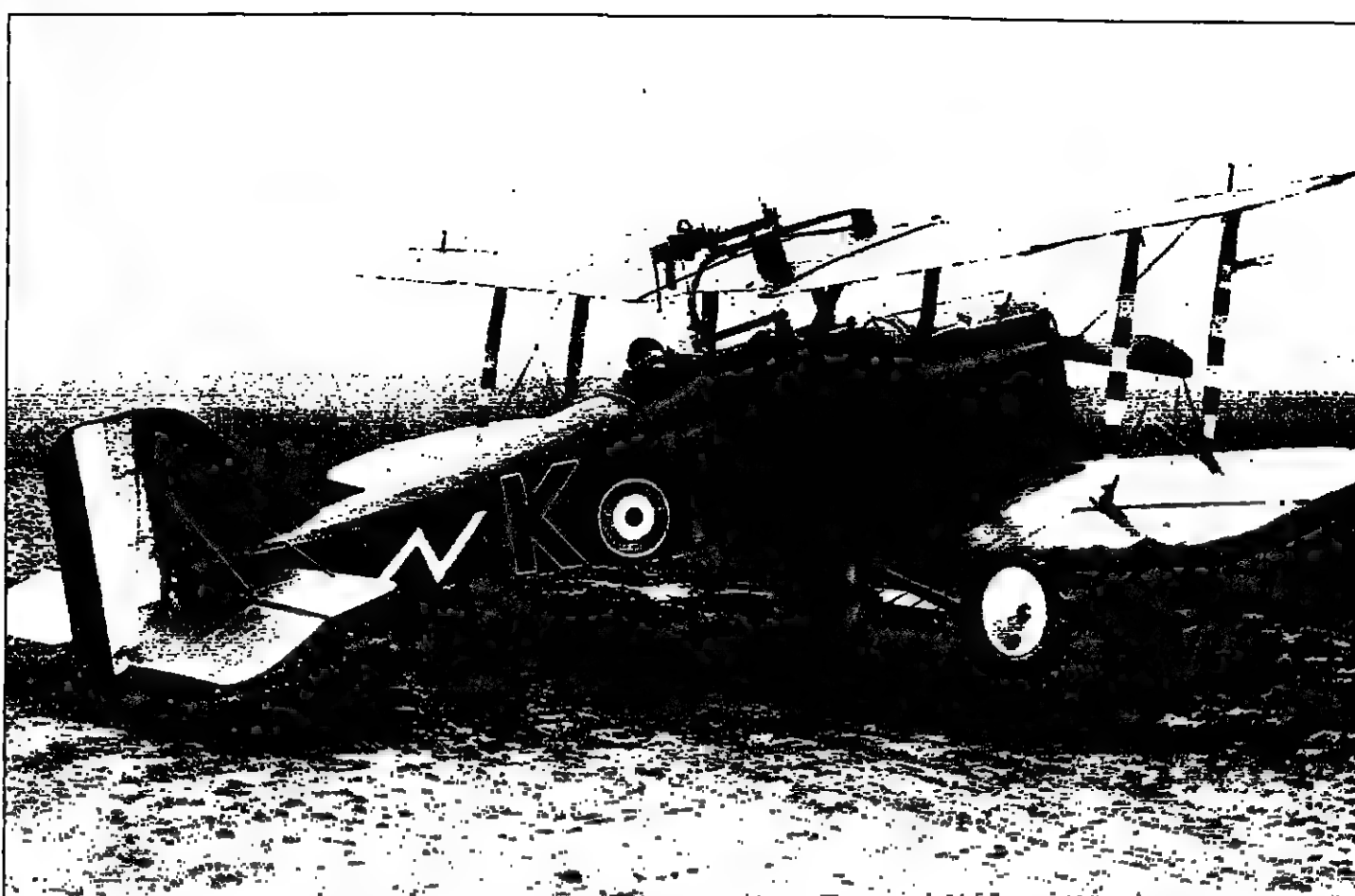
he was told to take a civilian licence as a first step to a career in military aviation. With £100 borrowed from his father he enrolled in the London and Provincial flying school at Hendon. There, after only four hours of somewhat rudimentary instruction, he was awarded his certificate in November 1915.

Accepted, as a result, for flying training with the RFC, he took his wings at the Central Flying School, Upavon, in the spring of 1916. He was then posted, as its youngest pilot, to No 32 Squadron, commanded by another Welshman, Major Lionel Rees, who was subsequently to win the VC. In May 1916, with the Battle of the Somme impending, No 32 and its DH2 scouts — a flimsy looking, but surprising effective contraption with a "pusher" propeller — were ordered to France. The mere cross channel flight was hazardous enough, with engines prone to stop without warning, quite apart from the likelihood of encountering the enemy.

Lewis instinctively took to the life

of the RFC and his letters of this period bubble with an almost childish enthusiasm. Even the first, fearsome contacts with the enemy seem unable to shake his composure and, in one of his early letters home, he describes air fighting thus: "It is a most extraordinary game. Better than football, yet something of the same. It is the same feeling to charge a Hun who sees you as it is to collar one of the biggest chaps in the scrum." No 32 became one of the most feared squadrons operating over the British First Army, and in that golden period before the appearance of the "flying circus" of Boelcke and von Richtofen the German Air Force was virtually banished from the skies over the Western Front.

Lewis was involved in action with 32 Squadron continuously until November 1916. His appendix had been troubling him for some months and eventually he was invalided home to have it removed. After another spell at Central Flying School, this time training novice aviators throughout most of



Lewis on his promotion to captain in 1918 and, above, at the controls of his SESA, "The Artful Dodger"

1917, Lewis was back in France in December of that year, as a flight commander in 40 Squadron, one of the most celebrated in the RFC. This flew the SESA, a more sophisticated aircraft than the DH2 and one which was to help re-establish air superiority over the Germans who had wrested it from the British early in 1917.

There he was in company with some of the most famous names in First World War flying. Major "Mick" Mannock, later to become the top-scoring British ace with 73 kills before his own death in action in July 1918, took Lewis under his wing and the two men became close friends. For the next six months 40 Squadron was to be in the thick of some of the most intense of the air combat as the Germans fought back with their new Albatros scouts and Fokker Triplanes.

Like his fellow pilots, life for Lewis was a constant brush with death. In the open cockpit of the SESA it was possible to pass out from lack of oxygen at over 20,000 feet and on several occasions he jerked himself back to consciousness to find his aircraft plunging earthwards. On another occasion, while flying extremely low in search of

ground targets to strafe, Lewis was lucky not to sustain at least severe injury when a wingtip struck the ground and his aircraft rolled over several times before coming to a halt, a total wreck. Disdaining medical attention he hitched a lift back to his base in the car of a passing colonel. Besides enemy aircraft — for which Lewis never showed anything but a healthy respect — one of the constant perils of life above the battlefield, was enemy anti-aircraft gun fire for which relatively slow-moving aircraft provided an easy target.

By this time Lewis's toll of the enemy was itself mounting, and although he never achieved the astronomical scores of men like Mannock, Bishop, Ball and McCudden, he was to end the war with a tally of 12 kills, qualifying him as an ace. A reticent man — Mannock dubbed him "Noisy" because of his self-effacing personality — he was never one to make wild claims and was always extremely critical of his own gunnery. Lewis was not only a fine pilot but was also respected as a flight commander. None of the novices posted to his flight was ever lost in action.

In July 1918 Lewis was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. The decoration had been instituted only the previous month to acknowledge the distinctive feats of what had by then become the Royal Air Force. To that point the RFC's officers had been awarded MCs for similar acts of bravery. As his letters of this period betray, Lewis was by then exhausted. "I am going home via hospital," he informs his father at this juncture. "I have been feeling a pretty good physical wreck lately, so I got an MO to examine me, and he stopped me flying."

It was the end of his war. After three weeks' leave he joined the Central Flying School where he remained until he was demobilised in January 1919. At one point he had toyed with the idea of staying in the RAF but this had lost its appeal by the end of the war. His father found him a job with the Lloyds insurance brokers Sedgwick Collins.

It was a change of pace and direction for a man who had been used to leading his young charges in the heat of battle, but he adjusted to it and came to enjoy the work. Joining a new non-marine syndi-

cate founded by Harry Sedgwick, Lewis became a member of Lloyds and travelled to America for the firm, eventually founding an American non-marine department.

By the outbreak of the Second World War this was thriving, but a new challenge beckoned and Lewis found himself back in uniform as a wing commander RAFVR, as part of Churchill's team at the Cabinet War Room. There his task was to prepare reports on the previous 24 hours for the daily briefing.

He kept in touch with his firm throughout this period and returned to Lloyds after the war. He subsequently joined another firm, Arbon Langrish, becoming chairman until 1965 when it merged with Clarksons. At his death he was the oldest member of Lloyds. A book, *Wings Over the Somme 1916-1918*, a collection of Lewis's letters and a diary he wrote in France was published in 1976. A revised edition incorporating letters from his brother Edmund was published in 1995.

Gwilym Lewis married, in 1925, Christian Robertson. She died in 1993 and he is survived by a son and two daughters. Another son died young.

ALAN GRAHAM APLEY

Alan Graham Apley, orthopaedic surgeon and teacher, died on December 20 aged 82. He was born on November 19, 1914.

ONE of the greatest teachers of orthopaedic surgery in recent times, Alan Graham Apley's lecturing technique was always compelling. His classic textbook *Apley's System of Orthopaedics and Fractures* (1959), a honed blend of fact, clarity and organisation, is now in its seventh edition. Apley himself was amused to learn that it earned the highest rate of fines for overdue books in St Thomas's Hospital Medical School library and flattered that a pirate edition of it was produced in the Middle East.

The book evolved from the text for a course which Apley initiated at the Rowley Bristow Orthopaedic Hospital, Pyrford. Although an accomplished surgeon, Apley also nurtured an outstanding talent for teaching. As a young man, appointed to his first consultant post at the Rowley Bristow in 1947, he immediately worked to set up a course to teach orthopaedics to trainee surgeons. The course — which still runs today — was always over-subscribed and in addition to the one hundred students fortunate enough to gain



a place, several more would attend as observers. Many owed their success in final specialist examinations largely to Apley, and it was partly due to their subsequent voting power that he was later elected by a large majority to the council of the Royal College of Surgeons in 1973.

Alan Graham Apley was the youngest son of a Jewish immigrant from Poland.

Apley was born in London and brought up first in Soho and then in Battersea where he went to St Ethelburga's school. There he came top of all London in the 11-plus equivalent of the day. But he was prevented from reaping the full rewards of his achievement because of his background. This episode coloured his attitude to religion and he

later abandoned his faith.

He attended Regent Street Polytechnic and then University College Hospital from which he qualified in medicine in 1938.

Towards the end of the Second World War, Apley served in the Royal Army Medical Corps. On demobilisation in 1947 he was appointed consultant surgeon at the Rowley Bristow and it was there that he came under the influence of the pioneering orthopaedic surgeon George Perkins. Inspired by his example, Apley harnessed his own talents to great effect, most notably in teaching, and it was only a year after his appointment that he set up what was to become an internationally renowned teaching course. It was also while he was at the Rowley Bristow that he designed one of the first purpose-built accident and emergency centres in the South of England, at St Peter's Hospital in Chertsey.

In 1972 Apley was appointed director of the orthopaedics department at St Thomas's Hospital which developed an international reputation under his guidance. He was an outspoken critic of recent National Health Service reforms, perceiving them as placing erroneous emphasis on commercial aspects of this most vital service. Managers,

he thought, had become too concerned with budgets to the detriment of more important issues such as the teaching, training and professional standards of patient care.

On his retirement from the NHS Apley remained much in demand. He became editor of the *Journal of Bone and Joint Surgery* which under him matured into the world class journal which it is today. He was particularly noted for his constructive rejection letters which were always instructive and encouraging. He also continued to lecture widely around the world, particularly in Canada where a satellite course to his own orthopaedic course was set up.

Apley was a keen sportsman and was a founder of the orthopaedic ski club which was pioneering in its combination of work and pleasure. However, his main recreation was music. He was an accomplished pianist, and when not at his study desk could often be found seated at his Steinway. He was particularly devoted to the music of Bach.

His first wife, Janie, whom he married in 1939 and supported him indefatigably, died in 1986 after a long illness. Apley married a second time to Violet in 1988. He is survived by her as well as by a daughter and son of his first marriage.

PROFESSOR STEPHEN REES JONES

Professor Stephen Rees Jones, art conservationist, died on December 17 aged 87. He was born on September 1, 1909.

ONE of the pioneers of modern methods of art conservation, Stephen Rees Jones was head of the technology department at the Courtauld Institute of Art for 25 years, from 1951 to 1976. His role as a scientist at the heart of the world's most celebrated and rarefied citadel of art history was uniquely influential.

Under his benign but perceptive gaze generations of art history students learned that the paintings they had thought of as abstract works of genius or baffling iconographical puzzles were real physical objects made of identifiable materials by fallible human hands. Moreover, they were objects subject to the vicissitudes of decay and restoration and Rees Jones's great contribution to the world of art was to rationalise in scientific terms the ways in which paintings change as they age.

Stephen Rees Jones was educated at Holywell Grammar School, Flintshire, and the University College of North Wales, Bangor, where he gained a BSc in physics and an MSc for research into X-ray diffraction. In 1935 he was appointed research assistant in the recently established scientific department of the Courtauld Institute of Art, and his analytical expertise was invaluable in the increasingly sophisticated fields of pigment identification and X-radiography.

As a result, the Courtauld Institute became one of the most important centres in the world for the technical examination of art.

During the war years, Rees Jones left the academic world to take charge of the laboratories of the Ministry of Aircraft Production that dealt with light alloy castings. Rejoining the Courtauld Institute after the war, he became head of the technology department in 1951. The department was not actually in the beautiful Adam house at 20 Portman Square — the Institute's home until it moved to Somerset House in 1990 — but in the mews buildings at the back, approached across the famous garden where art history stu-



dents lunched and smoked and sprawled through countless London summers.

The technology department itself was a warren of tiny rooms crammed with easels, microscopes and photographic equipment and students poring over paintings, books, X-rays on light boxes. This was the wonderful, quirky domain that Rees Jones presided over with charm and good humour and nobody who worked or studied there has ever forgotten it or him.

In the 1960s research programmes were begun in key areas of conservation, including solvent action in the cleaning of paintings and the structural treatment of paintings on canvas. Rees Jones designed and made the first hot-table for lining canvases — still exhibited in the present department as a landmark in the history of conservation.

During the 1960s the regular courses in the scientific examination and conservation of paintings for which the Technology Department became best known were established and these became

formalised into the present three-year diploma in 1976. Throughout the whole period that Rees Jones was creating an internationally important department — for which he was awarded a personal Chair in the Courtauld Institute — he was also, with a few colleagues, actively promoting the emerging conservation profession worldwide.

Their most significant initiative resulted in the foundation of the International Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (IIC) in 1950 which remains the principal international body of its kind. Rees Jones was one of its founder fellows, its treasurer and the first editor of *IIC Abstracts*.

He was closely involved with the organisation of IIC's first International Congress in Rome in 1961, which was the first of many such conferences that were to transform the way in which conservation was perceived by the wider academic world. When national offshoots of IIC were set up he was instrumental in the founding of the UK group and

became its chairman.

His own research interests were many, various and sometimes marvelously esoteric. His extensive published work ranged from a classic technical examination of the Coronation Chair, carried out just before the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, to a history of the artist's palette in terms of chromatography. In the 1960s, he became caught up in one of the periodic cleaning controversies and his paper on the subject published in the *Burlington Magazine* in 1962, was remarkable for its dignity and reason in the fevered atmosphere of the moment. His lectures were famous for their ability to make the most complex of technical issues understandable to scientifically illiterate art historians — not by talking down to them but by the total lucidity of his reasoning.

He retired from the Courtauld Institute in 1976, but continued teaching and advising. In the year before his retirement he was appointed Professor of Chemistry at the Royal Academy of Arts and for ten years gave an annual course on the principles of colour and light that became required viewing for practising painters and art students. He also continued to publish academic papers from his Sussex home, working on mathematical models for the material nature of works of art and how they interacted with moisture and light.

Rees Jones was an immensely kind and likeable man, admired and fondly recalled by the many students he taught. Small of stature, alert and quizzical in expression, he would regard one obliquely, the suspicion of amusement suddenly becoming a disarming smile.

His contribution to the world of conservation must be measured both by his own considerable achievements and by the legacy of the leading conservators around the world who owe their expertise to him. He himself seems to have founded something of a conservation dynasty: one of his sons (also Stephen) is a conservator and also became head of the technology department at the Courtauld Institute and a granddaughter is a gifted archaeological scientist.

FATHER OF HOUSE OF COMMONS

Mr. Lloyd George's impending resignation will remove from the House of Commons one who at the height of his powers a generation ago was destined to be, as Mr. Churchill is today, the nation's war leader through critical years...

In 1908 he became Chancellor of the Exchequer, and this key post he held through a long period of fierce political controversy in which he became a central figure. His first Budget of 1909 he characteristically described as a "war Budget"; and the war he then had in mind was against poverty and squalor. As recalled by the chairman at yesterday's meeting of the Caernarvon Liberal executive, Mr. Lloyd George "before the last war laid the foundations of the great social services which are now an integral part of our economic and social life." When Germany plunged Europe into war in 1914 he played an unforgettable part which belongs to world history. From the Exchequer he transferred in 1915 to the Ministry of Munitions, and in 1916 he became Secretary of State for War. He succeeded Mr. Asquith as Prime Minister in 1916, and he continued in this office until the break-up of

ON THIS DAY

December 28, 1944

David Lloyd George, 1st Earl Lloyd George of Dwyfor (1863-1945), was 81 when he was returned as member for Caernarvon Boroughs by a majority of only 18 votes. After 1922 he never held office again.

The second Coalition Government in 1922. There will be widely felt regret, not limited to the House of Commons, that the member for Caernarvon Boroughs, the Father of the House (as well as of two of its outstanding members), does not intend to offer himself for re-election. So ends a unique political career, which in more length extends back without a break to 1890, when the young David Lloyd George was elected as a supporter of Mr. Gladstone, and which for the greatness of its achievements is for ever memorable in history. In the hour of danger he became "the greatest War Minister since Chatham" — such was the authoritative judgment of his

colleague Lord Milner — and, without overpassing his proper respect for colleagues and subordination to Parliament, the most powerful Welshman since Henry VIII.

His retirement is timed to follow upon the consummation of the supreme task, the destruction of the German menace, of which in his earlier phase he was the protagonist. It will recall innumerable memories of the sufferings and triumphs of a generation ago, the more so that the national leadership has now passed to one who was himself Mr. Lloyd George's adjutant in many a fight of those heroic days. In nothing was the then Prime Minister's war leadership more truly representative of the nation he led than in the quality that his present successor has singled out, his "peculiar power of drawing from misfortune itself the means of future success." If that phrase leads the mind on to thoughts of our present determination to build upon the foundations ravaged by war a fairer social order than the British people have yet enjoyed, it will not be thereby diverted from the life's work of David Lloyd George. The whole modern conception of social service... derives from the pioneer work done by Mr. Lloyd George as the dominant figure in home affairs of the great Liberal Government of Campbell-Bannerman and Asquith...

John 4:16-1:50

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BUSINESS EDITOR Lindsay Cook

SATURDAY DECEMBER 28 1996

Directors to share almost £2.6m in payoffs and options

Golden goodbyes at Northern

By CHRISTINE BUCKLEY
INDUSTRIAL CORRESPONDENT

DIRECTORS of Northern Electric will share almost £2.6 million in payoffs and options after the company's £782 million takeover by CE Electric of America.

The payments, arising from Northern's defeat in a bitterly fought battle, will increase to more than £225 million the windfall due to utility chiefs after their privatised companies succumbed to takeover bids.

The payoffs will increase the Labour Party, which has mounted a relentless campaign against high salaries

and compensation packages for utility chiefs.

Its Treasury team, which is preparing to impose a windfall tax on the privatised utilities should Labour win the general election, recently highlighted payoffs and benefits totalling £19 million for utility directors involved in takeovers.

Those figures were compiled before Northern's takeover and before the agreed bids for East Midlands and London Electricity. Fennell greeted the announcement of a £1.6 million payment to William Courtney, 71, chairman of Southern Water when it was acquired by ScottishPower.

Northern directors will receive pay-offs worth £2.4 million and the four main directors will make share option profits of £170,000.

All Northern directors are entitled to two years' salary payment on termination of employment and it is likely that some pension consideration will be added.

It is not expected that Northern's board will survive more than a few weeks once CE Electric is fully installed, although one director could escape the axe.

Tony Hadfield, chief executive, will walk away with the largest package. On a salary

of £184,000 and with pension contributions last year of £131,000, he is likely to receive more than £700,000. Mr Hadfield will also make an instant £27,300 profit from share options. David Morris, chairman, can expect at least £550,000 to compensate for the loss of a £130,000 salary and £125,000 pension contributions. His share options will net a £40,000 profit.

The board will continue briefly into the new year as the full handover of the company is stalled by the holidays.

Northern has yet to advise shareholders to accept the offer after CE Electric scraped

to success by winning 50.3 per cent of acceptances on Christmas Eve. Large institutions, which had supported Northern's defence against the US group headed by CalEnergy, have also still to declare their hands.

Prudential lifted its stake in Northern to 12.27 per cent on Christmas Eve after a last-ditch attempt to save the company. It convinced investors with more than 900,000 shares to revoke acceptances and take the same amount of cash from the Pru. But it is thought likely that the hitherto forthright support from some groups, which also included

M&G and Foreign & Colonial, will crumble and they too will accept the 650p a share offer.

Of Northern's board it is thought that only Ron Dixon, the commercial director, will be able to survive under David Sokol, chairman and chief executive of CE Electric.

It is likely that a CalEnergy executive will step in to lead the Newcastle-based company and report to Mr Sokol.

Northern, which survived a hostile bid by Trafalgar House, will cease to be listed. It will be replaced in the FT-SE 250 index by Mayflower Corporation, the automotive design and components company.

B&Q poised to create 1,800 jobs

By MARTIN BARROW

B&Q, the do-it-yourself retailer, expects to create 1,800 jobs in 1997 through store openings and refurbishments.

The recruitment drive, which will increase B&Q's workforce by 10 per cent, takes place as DIY chains enjoy a sharp recovery in business as a result of the upturn in the housing market.

Most of the jobs will be available in B&Q's new Warehouse outlets, which serve the building trade as well as the DIY sector. Five new outlets, each employing up to 250 people, will open during 1997 at Coventry, Walsley in Merseyside, Bury near Manchester, Stockton-on-Tees and Enfield.

The rest of the new jobs will be created in B&Q Supercentres, the company's main chain, with ten new or refurbished outlets planned for 1997.

The new jobs will be evenly split between part-time and full-time staff. Older people will benefit from B&Q's policy of actively recruiting people aged over 50.

B&Q is Britain's leading DIY retailer, with a 15.9 per cent share of the market. The company has annual turnover of almost £13 billion. Earlier this month, B&Q, which is part of the Kingfisher retailing combine, said that like-for-like sales rose by 12.7 per cent in the third quarter.



Bill Whiting, managing director of B&Q Warehouse, which is due to open five new outlets next year

Nearly 1m escape homes equity trap

By GAVIN LUMSDEN

RECOVERY in the property market has freed 900,000 households from negative equity in 1996, the Nationwide Building Society says.

There are now 800,000 households with negative equity, down from 1.7 million at the end of 1995, the Nationwide says. It predicts a fall to 170,000 by the end of 1997 and to 40,000 by December 1998.

However, the society says that a "hard core" of negative equity will persist, particularly for buyers of starter homes and poor-quality flat conversions in the 1980s boom.

Release from negative equity has been particularly marked in London and the Home Counties, areas badly hit by the recession in the early

1990s. House prices in Greater London and the South-East have risen by more than 10 per cent in 1996, against a national average rise of 8.5 per cent.

Paul Sanderson, Nationwide head of research, said the recovery in the London property market was broadly based and would spread in 1997, particularly to the Midlands, South West and East Anglia.

In the past quarter, these regions have had underlying price rises of up to 1.9 per cent. Yorkshire and Humberside and the North West have seen a 1.7 per cent price rise, and prices in Northern Ireland rose 3 per cent. Wales and Scotland had rises of just 0.2 per cent and 0.5 per cent, respectively, in the quarter.

Actuaries warn on bond guarantees

By CAROLINE MERRELL

THE Institute of Actuaries has issued a strong warning about the sale of investment bonds with returns linked to rises in the UK stock market. Its warning comes amid growing concern about guarantees offered on these products.

Investors have poured millions into stock market bonds, attracted by their low-risk nature. Most are five-year investments which promise to pay a return if the market rises, but will only return the original investment if it falls. The Institute claims the chances of receiving only the original sum are much higher than the banks, building societies and life insurance companies claim. Peter Nowell, chairman of the institute's life board, said:

"Marketing material makes great play of the fact that the UK and US equity indices have not fallen in any five-year period since 1984. Looking back further gives the chances of an index falling over five years at around 20 to 25 per cent. For some bonds this can make the difference between getting a 10.5 per cent per annum return or merely getting a return of capital."

The Personal Investment Authority is known to be investigating the marketing of bonds. If the PIA decides that the products have been misold, then it could order the product providers to offer customers a refund of their money.

Weekend Money, page 29

Sega takes a hit in game wars

By ALASDAIR MURRAY

SEGA Enterprises, the Japanese video game company, issued a profits warning yesterday as the three-way computer games console war continued to take its toll.

Sega said that it would be forced to take a ¥23 billion (£120 million) exceptional charge with its full-year results, blaming the need to write off supplies of its outdated 16-bit game players. The company said that it would either sell its unwanted products, which are valued at about ¥7 billion, at a discount or dispose of them.

Sega's 16-bit console is a victim of the aggressive battle for control of the games market as the three main console manufacturers concentrate on the more ad-



Nintendo, creator of Super Mario, is challenging Sega

vanced 32-bit and 64-bit machines. But Sega's 32-bit machine, the Sega Saturn, has also been struggling against competition from Sony's 32-

bit Playstation. Earlier this month WH Smith said it would no longer be selling Sega Saturn games, hitting sales over the Christmas per-

iod when about 25 per cent of all computer games purchases are made. Smith said consumer demand in its shops was targeted towards Playstation or multimedia PC software. Sony has sold about 500,000 Playstations in the UK, against 200,000 Saturns.

Early signs are that Sega is also being hit by the launch of Nintendo's state-of-the-art 64-bit machine, which has sold strongly in America and Japan. The Nintendo 64 is scheduled to be launched in the UK in early March.

Sega added that it would also be taking a charge to cover accumulated losses of \$215 million at its US subsidiary. Net parent profits are now forecast to be about two thirds smaller at ¥5.31 billion, compared with previous predictions of ¥16 billion.

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BUSINESS TODAY

FTSE 100	4991.0	(-1.4)
Yield	3.85%	
FTSE All share	2001.16	(+0.82)
Nikkei	12989.04	(+77.48)
Dow Jones	6657.06	(+10.28)
S&P Composite	758.88	(+1.08)

US 3-MONTH	5.54%	(1/4)
Federal Funds	5.54%	
Long Bond	5.54%	
Yield	5.54%	

3-MONTH INTERBANK	67.5%	(3/4)
Life long oil	110%	(110)
Future (Mar)	110%	

STERLING		
New York	1.8918	(1.5740)
London	1.8916	(1.5739)
DM	2.6308	(2.6044)
FF	4.8725	(5.7850)
SF	2.2918	(2.2430)
Yen	195.28	(191.38)
£ Index	95.6	(94.5)

US \$		
DM	1.5555	(1.5533)
FF	1.2450	(1.2435)
Yen	116.17	(114.93)
£ Index	98.7	(98.4)

US \$		
DM	1.5555	(1.5533)
FF	1.2450	(1.2435)
Yen	116.17	(114.93)
£ Index	98.7	(98.4)

US \$		
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FF	1.2450	(1.2435)
Yen	116.17	(114.93)
£ Index	98.7	(98.4)

Tokyo close Yen 114.90

Brent 15-day (Mar) \$22.80 (\$22.60)

Gold \$389.55 (\$389.00)

* denotes midday trading price

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السؤال الأول

Laporte rounds off its revamp with £110m sale

By ERIC REGULY

LAPORTE, the chemicals group, yesterday largely completed its global restructuring by selling one of its main European businesses for £110 million. Jim Leng, chief executive, said that the company is now poised for expansion again.

Laporte sold the bulk of its European adhesives, sealants and coatings operations to Elf Atochem, the French energy group. The disposal of the businesses, which had an annual turnover of £100 million, will result in a goodwill write-off of £30 million and an exceptional gain of £28 million. The funds will be used to eliminate Laporte's debt.

Mr Leng said: "We wanted to put the house in good order before 1997. Now we've got an internationally competitive business with no debt."

The restructuring began in 1995, after a strategic review determined that the company was fighting on too many fronts in too many countries. The goal, implemented by a new executive team, was to focus the group on speciality chemicals and materials and



Jim Leng says that the restructured Laporte is again on the look-out for acquisitions

strive for top market positions in those.

The company, which had acquired more than 100 operating companies since 1980, has cut this number by a third. Diverse operations, with collective turnover of about £200 million, in South America — including a clay mine in

Peru — South-East Asia and North America were shed. The worldwide payroll has fallen by 15 per cent, to 6,000.

The effort, including the sale to Elf Atochem, has raised £170 million. Further funds will be raised if any of the remaining North American companies, including the adhesives and

sealant operations, are sold. Lazard Frères, the investment firm, is reviewing the North American portfolio.

Mr Leng said that Laporte is likely to expand by acquisition in 1997. Its requirements are companies with international presence and potential for market leadership, he said.

Go-ahead for Costain sell-offs

By ERIC REGULY

SHAREHOLDERS of Costain, the troubled construction group, yesterday approved the proposed sale of £52 million in assets.

The company's one-third stake in the Spitalfields development in London is to be bought by Metacorp of Malaysia for £23.4 million and the US coal business is going to Rencol Inc of America for £28.6 million. The coal disposal had been expected since July when Lomho pulled out of a deal.

Sir Christopher Benson, the chairman, who is stepping down along with Alan Lovell, chief executive, said that the sales would allow the company to concentrate on its core construction and engineering businesses.

A group of dissident shareholders picketed the extraordinary meeting with a mock "Costain closing down sale" auction.

They said they would attend another meeting on January 6, called to approve the issue or more shares. Costain shares were suspended at 46p last month.

Days lost to strikes highest since 1990

By PHILIP BASSETT, INDUSTRIAL EDITOR

BRITAIN is heading for its most strike-hit year since the end of the 1980s after a rash of industrial actions in the summer, new government figures will show. Whitehall officials expect the final count of days lost through strikes this year to be about 1.25 million — some three times higher than the total number of working days lost through strikes in 1995, when 415,000 days were lost.

Figures to be published by the Government's Office for National Statistics in the new year will confirm that Britain's strike record for 1996 will be the worst since 1990, when a long-running dispute in the engineering industry over shorter working hours pushed the overall number of working days lost through strikes up to 1.9 million.

While the increase in strike activity does not necessarily imply any long-term return of union militancy or strikes, the sharp rise in Britain's strike record shows that though dormant, union activity and poor industrial relations are

far from dead. Strikes this year in the Post Office, on the London Underground, in the fire service and in a range of regional rail companies have prompted Ian Lang, President of the Board of Trade, to issue a consultative green paper aimed at outlawing such strikes where they have a "disproportionate" effect. Ministers will use the suggested measures to have detailed proposals ready in time for the general election.

The total for 1996 will push the average for the 1990s up to some 1.5 million. Yet this still compares well with previous decades.

In the 1950s, Britain lost on average annually some 3.3 million working days through strikes, rising to 4.9 million in the 1960s and peaking at 20.2 million in the 1970s, affected heavily by the two miners' strikes of 1972 and 1974, and the winter of discontent of 1978-1979. Strikes then fell back in the 1980s to an annual average of 8.1 million working days lost.

Surprise fall in orders for US durables

FROM A CORRESPONDENT


ORDERS for costly US manufactured goods dropped unexpectedly in November because of weaker demand for computer components and communications equipment, the Commerce Department said yesterday.

New orders for all types of durable goods fell 1.6 per cent in November to a seasonally adjusted \$171.8 billion. It was the first decline in three months and in sharp contrast to the forecasts of Wall Street economists for a 0.1 per cent rise in orders, dispelling fears of a rise in interest rates.

The decrease in November orders came after a revised 0.5 per cent gain in October and a 4.5 per cent rise in September orders. Previously, the department said October orders had risen only 0.3 per cent.

The last time durable goods orders fell was in August, when they were down 3.6 per cent. Although November orders declined, shipments of finished goods were up 0.8 per cent to \$170.1 billion. There was a strong gain in shipments of electronic and electrical equipment and more shipments of commercial aircraft and parts.

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BUSINESS ROUNDUP

New tax rules 'unfair to the self-employed'

SOME of the new self-assessment tax rules are "unfair" and many will overpay, it was claimed yesterday. The Chartered Institute of Taxation said pitfalls in the law will penalise the self-employed. Self-assessment started in April and affects more than nine million people, including the self-employed and higher-rate taxpayers. The first self-assessment returns will be sent out in April 1997, although the self-employed will make their first payments in January.

The Institute claims that a "substantial proportion" of the four million self-employed affected will consistently overpay year after year because of their pension arrangements. Self-employed taxpayers who provide for their own pensions are allowed to "carry back" premiums paid to the previous tax year — but under the new system such arrangements will be ignored when interim payments for the following year are being calculated. An Inland Revenue spokeswoman said: "Self-assessment does not affect the amount of tax relief people can claim on their pension contributions."

Trade conditions tough

THERE is unlikely to be a significant recovery in the level of UK business failures in 1997, according to Gerling-Nemur, the credit insurer. The company forecasts that about 38,000 UK businesses will fail next year, a similar number to the expected total for 1996. In spite of signs of an economic recovery, Gerling-Nemur said that evidence gathered from the 600,000 UK businesses it had monitored suggested that trading conditions remained tough.

Mercedes pulls ahead

MERCEDES-BENZ, the German carmaker, yesterday predicted a sales boom for 1997 as it announced that sales this year would total DM77 billion, up from DM72 billion in 1995. For the first time, the company sold more than 640,000 cars, of which more than 370,000 were exported. In 1995, it sold 590,230 cars. The company said that its 1996 earnings would be above the previous year's total of DM2.75 billion.

GEI in steel disposal

GEI INTERNATIONAL, the processing and packaging machinery manufacturer, is selling its steel finishing and distribution businesses to The Timken Company for £5.1 million. The debtors, creditors and some stock of the businesses have been retained by the vendor, and a further £3 million net cash is expected after their realisation. The combined business was not profitable and had net assets of £6.39 million.

Gucci eyes new listing

GUCCI, the Italian luxury goods group, could consider a stock market listing on the Milan bourse in 1997, Domenico De Sole, the group's chairman and managing director, said. The company is already listed in New York and Amsterdam. In November, Gucci said that its sales were up by 81.2 per cent, to \$620.2 million, in the first nine months of its financial year to October 31 and were up by 69.1 per cent, to \$230.2 million, in the third quarter to the end of October.

Newman response

NEWMAN TONKS, the maker and distributor of architectural products, yesterday said that it will issue its formal defence against a £182.6 million takeover bid by FKI on January 6. The company rejected the 150p-a-share cash offer earlier this month, claiming that it undervalued the business. The shares closed at 154p yesterday. Newman Tonks has undergone extensive restructuring and more than a half of its business is now based outside the UK.

TOURIST RATES

	Bank Buys	Bank Sells
Australia \$	2.50	2.04
Austria Sch	13.25	17.76
Belgium Fr	66.41	82.11
Canada \$	2.385	2.226
Cyprus Cyp	0.819	0.764
Denmark Kr	10.50	8.70
Finland Mk	8.28	7.88
France Fr	11.17	8.82
Germany Dm	2.75	2.54
Greece Dr	420	405
Hong Kong \$	15.87	12.57
Ireland £	120	100
Israel Sh	1.08	0.99
Japan Yen	171.75	161.0
Italy Lit	2853	2508
Malta £	256.50	180.30
Netherlands Gld	0.94	0.880
New Zealand \$	0.083	0.073
Norway Kr	11.35	10.53
Portugal Esc	272.50	254.00
S Africa Rd	14.40	7.90
Spain Ptas	226.00	213.00
Sweden Kr	12.08	11.08
Switzerland Fr	2.27	2.19
Turkey Lira	187220	178250
USA \$	1.770	1.640

Bank for small denomination bank notes only as supplied by Barclays Bank PLC. Different rates apply to traveller's cheques. Rates as at close of trading yesterday.

THE SUNDAY TIMES

"I wanted to work rather than pursue academic qualifications. I wanted to earn some money in the big wide world," says Gary Leigh, who left school after O-levels 17 years ago and is now a property multi-millionaire. But these days Leigh is a rarity...

Business, The Sunday Times tomorrow



WIDE-AWAKE 29

Make sure you have £100 in your account

WEEKEND MONEY

IN FOCUS 30

The banking sector into the spotlight



THE TIMES PERSONAL FINANCE NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR

Gavin Lumsden on how trust managers have looked after your money in the past 12 months

Striving to be on top of the stocks

In spite of its recent nervousness, the UK stock market has been kinder than expected this year, with the FT-SE all-share index providing just less than 11 per cent growth to investors. The year started well after a bullish 1995, but markets became nervous in the spring and remained so until Alan Greenspan, chairman of the US Federal Reserve, said he was relaxed about the pace of economic growth.

At this, United States and United Kingdom markets raced ahead, barely changing their stride as the American public duly re-elected President Clinton, only to fall in recent weeks after another remark from Mr Greenspan that the markets were too high.

To get the most out of this uncertain behaviour private investors relying on stock market funds, such as unit trusts and investment trusts, had to pick managers who really knew their stocks.

Top of the unit trust stock-pickers was Mark Slater, manager of the Johnson Fry Slater Growth fund — started by his father, Jim Slater — who by December 16 had turned £1,000 invested in the new year into £1,421.23.

This beats hands down the average performance of the 1,606 unit trusts, which would have just added a paltry £7.11 to the £1,000 lump sum, according to HSW, the statistics provider. Even the average UK growth unit trust, of which the Slater fund is one, lifted the

sum by only £62.98. Mr Slater invests only in reasonably priced stocks with strong earnings growth prospects, healthy cash flow, and a rising share price.

This year's buoyant economic growth in the UK, combined with low inflation, he says, has been a good backdrop for this style. Significantly, the Johnson Fry Value fund, which seeks cheap shares, has done poorly in comparison this year.

Although not sector-focused, Mr Slater is partial to support services stocks, particularly companies such as Parity, Lynx Holdings and MMT Computing, which are exploit-

ing the "millennium factor". The predominance of smaller company funds in the top 20 belies the fact that after a good first quarter the tide has been running against them as institutional investors turned to blue chips for security. The Mercury Recovery fund has exploited small and large cap stocks. Previously focused on the smaller company sector, it ensured its place in the top ten when it raised its holdings of blue-chip stocks to 70 per cent halfway through the year.

However, not all large caps have prospered. John Wilton, investment manager at Standard Life, notes that utilities, traditionally good growth

managers against legal suits by their employees.

Elsewhere, investing money was a risky business. Certainly 1996 was the year you did not want to be in South Korea. All four funds dedicated to the country almost halved their investors' money this year and were at the bottom of the HSW tables for unit and investment trusts.

Ashok Shah, Far East portfolio manager at Old Mutual, says Korea has been hit by the strengthening of the US dollar, which has made its key semiconductor, steel and shipbuilding industries uncompetitive against Japan. Corporate earnings are down 40 per cent on last year, he says.

Japan needs all the good news it can get as its debt-burdened banks attempt to recover from the collapse of the property boom a few years ago. Investors in Japan unit trusts would have seen £26 of their £1,000 disappear this year. The only good news in the Far East has been Hong Kong, which has seen its Hang Seng index grow 28.4 per cent since January amid confidence that next year's handover to China will be good for business.

Currency worries in the form of a rise in sterling were particularly harmful to UK investors trying to eke some money out of emerging markets, says Radhika Ajmera of Aberdeen Trust. "There has been a huge disparity in performance at both stock and

Continued on page 28

Expert tips for 1997 — page 33

ing the "millennium factor". Many companies have computer systems that will read the year 2000 as 1900, which could wreak havoc on their administration and businesses if not corrected. "It is a market which is appearing out of nowhere," said Mr Slater.

Gervais Williams, manager of NatWest UK Smaller Companies unit trust, which came fourth overall, providing investors with £307 of growth in the year to date, also liked support services, but included pub and restaurant stocks such as Regent Inns and Wetherspoon and oil explorers and producers such as British Borneo and Cairn Energy as

stocks, have underperformed this year amid fears of regulatory intervention over boardroom excesses and a Labour windfall tax.

The switch to "quality" was also the pattern in the US, according to Charlie Park, manager of Hill Samuel US Smaller Companies, one of three such unit trusts that got in the top 20 on their performance in the first half of the year but have struggled since.

His favourite niche stocks have been Iron Mountain, a New York firm, whose document-storage business provides a wave of steady cash, and Executive Risk, a Connecticut company insuring se-



WINNERS AND LOSERS: THE BEST AND WORST PERFORMING TRUSTS OF 1996			
TOP 10 UNIT TRUSTS OVERALL			
	£1,000 Investment	Rank	
Johnson Fry Slater Growth	1421.23	1	
Jupiter European	1334.00	2	
Germano UK Smaller Companies	1307.30	3	
NatWest UK Smaller Cos	1283.88	4	
HSBC Hong Kong Growth	1277.38	5	
GT Orient Acc	1265.20	6	
Old Mutual European	1261.21	7	
Schroder Smaller Companies Inc	1241.94	8	
Mercury Recovery	1239.08	9	
Baring Europe Select	1239.57	10	
BOTTOM 10 UNIT TRUSTS OVERALL			
	£1,000 Investment	Rank	
Fidelity Japan Smaller Cos	715.34	1484	
Govest MIS Hong Kong Bear	695.11	1485	
Save & Prosper Southern Africa	683.98	1486	
Mercury WT Euro Equity Bear	670.74	1487	
Govest MIS German Bear	646.45	1488	
Govest MIS French Bear	647.91	1489	
Schroder Seoul	622.33	1490	
Old Mutual Thailand Acc	602.18	1491	
Baring Korea	589.52	1492	
Save & Prosper Korea	580.58	1493	
TOP 10 INVESTMENT TRUSTS			
	£1,000 Investment	Rank	
English National	2112.01	1	
TR Technology	1807.91	2	
Baring Emerging Europe	1730.42	3	
Central European Growth Fund	1540.88	4	
SR Pan-European	1511.98	5	
Bemcor Dual Cap	1486.86	6	
Providencea	1449.71	7	
Foreign & Colonial Enterprise	1441.65	8	
WOT Cap	1441.57	9	
Firstbry Worldwide Pharmacy	1427.25	10	
BOTTOM 10 INVESTMENT TRUSTS			
	£1,000 Investment	Rank	
Fleming Indian	726.09	406	
Fidelity Japanese Values	678.63	407	
Lazard Brix India	670.81	408	
Perpetual Japanese	665.57	409	
Futura Cap	662.78	410	
Schroder Japan Growth	652.52	411	
INVESTCO Korea	596.47	412	
East German	570.18	413	
Korea-Europe Fund	561.85	414	
Schroder Korea Fund	550.83	415	

£1,000 lump sum January 1-December 16. Source: HSW

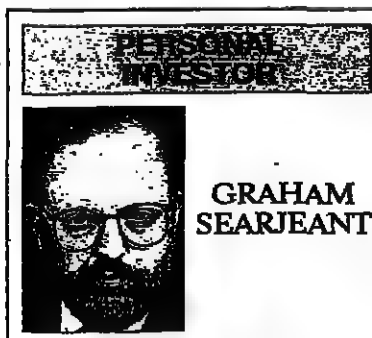
Try new year irresolution

New Year can be a tempting trap for all but the most disciplined investors. The temptation is to make your decisions for the year from the many suggestions offered by advisers, brokers and the press. New year share tips, though not always up to the standard of *Tempus*, are more likely to outperform the London market average than not. Predictions on markets and currencies can make your year since performance usually differs greatly between continents. Year-end tables of winners and losers among unit and investment trust show that choosing trusts can have almost as big an impact on investment results as choosing individual shares for a portfolio.

The trap many of us fall into is to make long-term decisions on short-term tests, or decisions that through indecision, conservatism or indolence turn out to be long-term. Experience suggests that many of the best share tips, being based on emerging information not yet absorbed into market perception, come good within three months.

Currency and market trends are liable to last longer but may not be the right bricks to build a longer-term strategy. The Hong Kong market, for instance, looks an interesting speculation for the changeover year of 1997. But if you risk buying a unit trust such as HSBC Hong Kong Growth (top of its sector over five years according to research by Microcap) you should monitor it like an individual share, rather than lock it away as most investors prefer to do with trusts.

Core investments in unit and invest-



GRAHAM SEARJEANT

ment trusts should be chosen on a much longer view than 12 months. As argued here over the Morgan Grenfell affair, it is better to look beyond the latest suspect marvels to consistent above-average performers. Among specialist unit trust companies, Perpetual has a strong record in several sectors over five years, though not so good of late. Jupiter's trusts feature well among Microcap's long-term winners, but the company is now part of a German bank. The Britannia stable, though still patchy, is improving well and Profit rates highly in house markets. If you follow the conventional wisdom, however, you would hardly be putting money in anything at the moment except, perhaps, a good emerging markets trust. When Alan Greenspan, chairman of the US Federal Reserve Board, intentionally knocked the world's stock markets a few weeks ago, one London analyst argued that everyone knew 1997 was going to be a

"down" year and it seemed to have started already. That proved premature. What "everyone knows" does not always happen, especially if what traders do says something else.

If shares were slightly ahead of trend in London and on Wall Street a year ago, they are further ahead of the game now, after big gains in the US and another above-average year in London. A 5-10 per cent correction on Wall Street, if it comes, will hit London more than most other markets. Apart from that, however, our attention is bound to centre on the election. Big fund managers expect a Labour victory and are not dismayed by the prospect. But uncertainty will in any case put many people's buying decisions off.

Should Labour win, it will be under double pressure to show its anti-inflationary monetary credentials and to grasp the nettle on borrowing that Tories have recently brushed with kid gloves. If Labour's Gordon Brown put base rates up slightly and stayed his Budget till November, shares and gilt-edged should react positively. But the drive to be active in the first hundred days is overwhelming these days. Investors would have to watch for a bigger utility levy than spin-doctors first put about and hidden taxes on business, investors or pension funds. Some of the answers will become easier to read over the next few weeks. Until then, investors have no reason to show their hand either, except to make sure their portfolio is not dominated by utilities.

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*Source: Microcap. Offer to 144, gross income reinvested in Shanghai. Hong Kong Fund launched 26.11.90 since launch performance: 3.12.90 - 2.12.96, 1996 performance: 1.1.96 - 2.12.96, 5 year performance: 287%. Minimum investment: £5,000. China Fund launched 9.1.90 'N' shares performance: 15.1.90 - 2.12.96, 1996 performance: 23.1.96 - 2.12.96, 5 year performance: 287%. Minimum investment: £5,000. The Hong Kong Fund is a sub-fund of the Guinness-based Global Strategy Fund Limited, the China Fund is a sub-fund of the Select Funds PLC, a Dublin-based UCITS fund. Past performance is not necessarily a guide to the future. Fluctuations in the value of the underlying securities and the income from them and changes in interest and exchange rates mean that the value of this investment and the income arising from it may fall as well as rise and is not guaranteed. Investors should also be aware of the above average volatility associated with many developing markets. For your protection, telephone calls may be recorded, served by Guinness Flight Global Asset Management Limited, regulated by the Financial Services Authority.

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Caroline Merrell looks at the European experience

No place to put your money



Disenchantment: while Sir James Goldsmith made political mileage from concern over Europe, 160,000 people who invested in trusts lost out financially

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Europe was a banana skin for the Government in 1996. It was also a headache for investors. A turbulent year in the European trust sector was marked by the scandal surrounding the Morgan Grenfell European funds, including MG European Growth, a widely recommended and apparently top-performing unit trust from a blue-blooded City house.

These events coincided with the break-up of the giant Kleinwort Benson European Privatisation Investment Trust (Kepit) whose performance had always failed to live up to its launch promises.

As the year closed, a £220 million MG compensation package was announced. But the combination of these two events left 160,000 investors disenchanted with the European dream.

Elsewhere performance was mixed. For example, the top performing trust in the sector, Jupiter European, rose by 35 per cent over the year and the second best performing trust, the Old Mutual European, rose by 28 per cent. The average unit trust rose by around 9 per cent, while the

bottom performing, Old Mutual Swiss Equities, fell by nearly 10 per cent.

However, these performances were overshadowed by events at the end of the summer when Morgan Grenfell, owned by Deutsche Bank, Germany's largest bank, was forced to suspend three funds, valued together at £1.4 billion, because Peter Young, the investment manager, had built up substantial holdings in small unquoted Scandinavian companies.

The proportion of the fund that had been invested in unquoted stocks had risen above the 10 per cent limit imposed by the Securities and Investments Board, the City watchdog. When the funds were suspended, the level of unquoted stock was revealed to have risen to nearly 30 per cent, or almost £700 million.

When the funds reopened for trading two days after they were suspended, investors queued up to sell their holdings, disinvesting to the tune of £180 million. Morgan Grenfell had to contribute £180 million to support the fund. Deutsche Bank agreed to step in and compensate the investors for any "losses that had resulted from the irregularities".

Independent financial advisers had been putting millions of pounds of their clients' money into this fund. Much came at the end of the tax year, as advisers encouraged investors to use up their annual personal equity plan allowance to diversify into Europe.

The problems with the two funds, though entirely different in their nature, have cast a pall over investment in Europe. Kleinwort Benson's problems stemmed from the fact that it took about £500 million at launch.

The trust had a very narrow investment criteria, which meant that it could only buy shares in privatised European companies. It was unable to get enough of the right quality stock. It immediately fell to a big discount (that is, its share price was below its net asset value), a gap which Kleinwort Benson was unable to close. Eventually, the board of the trust decided that the only option was to restructure.

It managed to fend off a

£500 million hostile bid from Touche Remnant European Growth Trust (Treg) and instead opted to offer investors a choice of cash or an investment in an equivalent M&G or Kleinwort fund. The vast majority — 80 per cent of 70,000 investors, chose to liquidate their holdings.

Ian Millward, of Chase de Vere, said: "The Morgan Grenfell situation was far more damaging to the unit trust industry than Kepit. Morgan Grenfell has gone a long way towards trying to mend the damage." He said it was unfortunate that Kepit had hit the problems it had, because some of the more lucrative European privatisation, such as Deutsche Telekom, were beginning to get on the road. The shares shot to a premium.

For those who have not been put off investing in Europe, Mr Millward recommends funds from Credit Suisse and Fidelity. For example, the Credit Suisse European has risen 13 per cent over the year, while Fidelity has a range of four European funds that have risen between 30 and 50 per cent over the past three years.

Managers strive to be on top

Continued from page 27

country level in emerging markets this year," she says.

While South Africa fell 25 per cent in dollar terms as the rand collapsed, Hungary and Russia doubled in value. In Latin America, Brazil was best performer, with a 50 per cent rise in local terms.

In spite of the furore this year over the Kleinwort European Privatisation Investment Trust, which was converted into a unit trust after several years of poor performance, many investment trusts have proved more profitable than their unit trust counterparts. Ten have returned more than the Johnson Fry Slater Growth unit trust in spite of the discounts of share prices to net asset value. As with the unit trusts, investment trusts focusing on smaller companies, Europe, or specialist areas such as technology and pharmacy, have done the best.

English National, the top performing investment trust, has returned a whopping £2.112 on the £1,000 January investment. However, it is something of an anomaly, its share price having benefited from a bid move by Joe Lewis, a Bahaman businessman, earlier this year and not from any increase in net asset value.

However, this is not the case for second-placed TR Technology, which

grew the £1,000 into £1,807.91 by December 16. James de Saumarez, retail managing director of Henderson Investors, which manages the fund, says investment trusts benefit from their ability to borrow money to take advantage of rising markets — known as gearing — something unit trusts cannot do.

Investment trusts also enable investors to get a bargain in a way that unit trusts cannot. As separately quoted companies, investment trusts issue shares, the value of which can rise and fall according to market sentiment.

That sentiment is not always linked to how a trust is actually performing. A trust that is diligently growing its net asset value can see its share price fall. This is called a discount and can be a good time to buy if you think that the price will rise later.

Many analysts believe Invesco Enterprise, an investment trust focusing on smaller companies, is such a bargain. It used to be called the Lazard Smaller Companies and is languishing at a huge 25 per cent discount to its net asset value after several years of underperformance under Lazard's Andy Crossley, its new manager, is a respected smaller companies fund manager and many believe investors could benefit from a "double whammy" as its share price rises and small companies recover.

Bonds — government debt that pays guaranteed interest and repayment of

capital, have also had a mixed year. Bonds tend to act as a mirror image of equities, doing well when stock markets do badly, and usually run scared at the first whiff of inflation.

True to form, US bonds returned a meagre 2.5 per cent to investors as the bull run in US equities stoked fears that the economy would overheat and cause inflation. In spite of similar inflationary pressures in the UK, gilts, performed surprisingly well, with a 6.5 per cent return to investors.

However, the best returns for bond investors were in Europe, particularly in Italy and Spain where total returns for the year surpassed 20 per cent as prices rocketed. Robert MacIntyre, of Whittingdale, the gilt expert, said prices rose as Italy and Spain introduced tight budgets in an attempt to meet the Maastricht criteria for a single European currency, forcing yields on their bonds down to German levels.

The best international fixed-interest funds in the 12 months to November were Baring Global and Barclays Unicredit European Bond. According to Miroslav, these added £32 and £68 to the £1,000 investment respectively. The best UK and gilt fixed interest funds were both from Scottish fund managers. Abraxas Fixed Interest achieved £1.139 while Allied Dunbar Convertible and Gilts provided £1.118.

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New pension, the same old danger

In the dyspeptic days after Christmas, contemplating pensions is as appealing as the prospect of another mince pie. But thousands of employees must fix their minds upon this subject, however unappetizing. For in the months to come they may be forced to make complex decisions that could mean the difference between shandy or champagne Christmas in their old age.

Companies looking to cut the cost of running pension schemes will, in 1997, be increasingly turning to group personal pensions replacing a traditional general fund with a series of individual plans. In theory, employees should enjoy all the benefits of independence, being able, for example, to pack up their plans as they move from job to job. But the reality can be very different.

The value of any personal pen-



ANNE ASHWORTH
Personal Finance Editor

sion largely depends how much cash is invested and how much disappears into the pockets of the middlemen arranging the deal. If large initial deductions are made, then there will be sizeable penalties for those who switch employers in early years, and poorer payouts for those who stay the course.

Anyone offered the option of a group personal pension should ask who is paying the adviser setting up the fund. If you learn that large

amounts will be disappearing in insurance company charges and commissions, then you might be better off arranging your own plan.

If answers to this first question prove evasive, then look at the projection for the value of your plan at the end of the first year. If the figure is less than you will have paid in, point out that other firms of advisers come much cheaper.

The life insurance industry is said to consider the GPP as a

prime sales opportunity for 1997. This should put anyone on his or her guard. Why should an industry which has yet to resolve one scandal involving personal pensions show itself to be any more honourable in future sales of the same investment?

Bond concern

THE pitfalls of guaranteed bonds, where the return may not be as munificent as the promises in the large and small print, have long been highlighted by *Weekend Money*. And this weekend the Institute of Actuaries has voiced its concern that "the chances of getting lower payouts are much higher than might be expected". The actuaries should now co-operate with City watchdogs to put an end to misleading promises before more investors are deluded.

Caroline Merrell and Sara McConnell with a last-minute warning on flotations

Join the wide-awake club

Millions of members of the big building societies set to float or be taken over in 1997 have just two days to top their accounts up to £100, or lose out on their long awaited free shares or cash. Members of the Halifax, Bristol & West, Northern Rock and the Woolwich must have this amount in their accounts by December 31, 1996, to qualify to vote and to receive their bonus.

There are fears that thousands will lose out because they have depleted their accounts in the spending frenzy of Christmas and New Year sales. The societies say that

cheques paid on Tuesday December 31 will be enough to ensure that savers do not lose out on the windfall. If the cheques subsequently bounce, then the savers will forego their bonuses.

If savers do not top up their accounts, then they will suffer the same fate as about 100,000 savers with the Alliance & Leicester who failed to heed warnings from the society and did not replenish their accounts by the deadline of October 14.

It is estimated that they have together lost out to the tune of £1 million. All the societies have been contacting their

members to encourage them to top up their accounts. About 17,000 people have now acted to top up their accounts at the Bristol & West alone.

Each of the building society conversion schemes is subtly different. For instance, in order to qualify for the basic distribution of shares, Halifax members had to have £100 in their accounts on November 25, 1994, and £100 at the end of this year.

As part of its £10 billion conversion, the Halifax is also offering an additional variable share distribution for those with more than £1,000 invested. These extra shares will be

based on the lower of two balances between November 25, 1994 and the date of the special general meeting in February.

The Woolwich's 2.9 million members who had £100 in their accounts on December 31, 1996 will only qualify for the basic payout if they also had £100 in their account at midnight on December 31, 1995.

Under the Woolwich's scheme, investors who have been with the society for more than two years and who have between £1,000 and £50,000 in their accounts will qualify for a larger payout, based on the

lower of two balances between December 31, 1995 and the 31st in February.

Only those one million Northern Rock members who had £50 in their accounts on April 2 this year, and who also have £100 at the end of this year will qualify for the share distribution.

The rules are different again at the B&W, where savers who had an account with the society at the end of 1994 and subsequently had £100 with the society on April 15 this year will benefit from a cash bonus in the Bank of Ireland takeover, providing they have £100 in their accounts at December 31.

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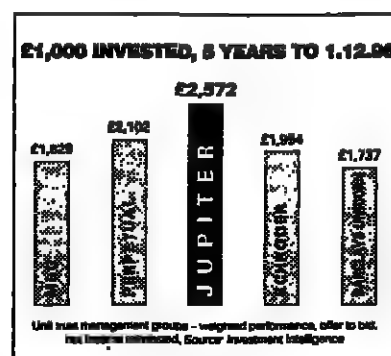
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Schroder	44	78	48	23	22	16	17	13	8	13
M&G	105	98	78	32	46	53	47	58	40	24
Barclays Unicorn	86	55	69	59	78	86	74	95	85	62

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Matthew Wall turns the spotlight on banking As safe as banks



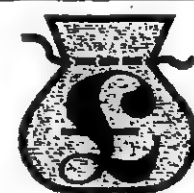
The way we were: the banking sector has come a long way since the days when huge staffs balanced ledgers by hand

UK retail banks are enjoying themselves. Bad debt is under control and consumer borrowing, one of the most lucrative sources of revenue, is growing as the economic recovery strengthens. Expected interest rate rises and a revival in the housing market also mean mortgage lending profit margins can be increased.

Across the sector analysts are expecting dividend growth of 15 per cent to 20 per cent over the next two years, compared with 8 per cent to 10 per cent dividend growth for the rest of the market. Peter Toeman, banking analyst at ABN Amro Hoare Govett, said: "Lending growth is running at about 10 per cent per annum, driven by consumer credit which has the biggest profit margins."

For the first time banks are managing to increase profitability while reducing staff numbers, thanks to the increased efficiency of electronic banking. Last month Royal Bank of Scotland reported healthy pre-tax profits of £695 million for the year to September 30, 15 per cent higher than the year before. This was in spite of Direct Line, its direct insurance and financial services subsidiary, suffering a slump in its profits contribution to £26.5 million, against £112 million last year.

John Shelley, director of UK larger companies at Abtrust, the fund manager with £3 billion under management, said:



SECTOR IN FOCUS

"We think the prospects for the UK retail bank sector are good. We particularly like the Asian banks, HSBC and Standard Chartered, which are both undervalued and yet perfectly placed in the fastest growing consumer finance markets of the world. Standard Chartered is also a likely bid target. Our favourite UK bank is Lloyds TSB which has demonstrated strong commitment to enhancing shareholder value."

Mr Shelley believes next year's building society flotations, dominated by the Halifax Building Society which is expected to raise at least £10 billion, will attract heavy US investment, as the UK bank sector has lagged behind its strongly-performing US counterpart.

Lloyds Bank's merger with TSB is expected to produce cost savings of at

least £350 million. Its widely-admired purchase of Cheltenham & Gloucester Building Society has been emulated by Abbey National, which recently completed its takeover of National & Provincial. And Royal Bank's chief executive, George Mathewson, has made no secret of his interest in buying a building society.

The high profit margins associated with retail banking are attracting new entrants, such as Tesco, J Sainsbury, and Safeway. And BAT, the tobacco and financial services giant which owns insurance companies Allied Dunbar and Eagle Star is also rumoured to be sizing up the market.

But there are concerns that banks, not known for their far-sightedness, may relax their lending criteria to capitalise on consumer and corporate demand. This could let the bad debt genie out of the bottle again and lead to a slump in profits. In 1991, when the recession was at its most severe, bad debt accounted for 1.5 per cent of total lending. It is now about 0.5 per cent.

Hoare Govett's Peter Toeman also believes the benign outlook for banks is by and large already reflected in their share prices. Investors looking for a short-term punt should look to other sectors. Over the medium-term, however — three to five years, say — the sector does remain attractive.

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Sarah McConnell reports on how the second crop of Tesses has fared

New-crop Tesses show a falling yield

Next week the second crop of tax-exempt special savings accounts (Tesses), worth an estimated £2 billion, will mature. Anyone who has invested the maximum £9,000 over the past five years will be looking at an average lump sum of £11,491.73. The lucky ones who invested with the top-performing Chesham Building Society will get £11,953.65. At the other end of the scale, investors with the Co-operative Bank will get just £10,839.82.

You may want to take the money and run. But if you want to open another Tessa, you will have a nasty shock. Not only are rates up to 7 per cent lower than when you invested in 1992, but Tesses have become complicated. You have a choice of variable rates, fixed rates, accounts linked to the FT-SE 100 index and escalator Tesses, where the rate is guaranteed to rise each year by a set amount.

Many savers were bruised by their experience with variable-rate Tesses, the rates of which had halved from 14 to 7 per cent over five years. A number of banks and building societies rushed in with offers of fixed rates over five years, to tempt people with the promise of security in new Tesses. There was a good response. At Abbey National, 75 per cent of savers putting money into second-generation Tesses last year opted for the Abbey's 7 per cent fixed rate rather than its 6.6 per cent variable rate.

But now advisers question the wisdom of locking into a fixed rate for five years. Rates are starting to rise after another year of freefall, and five years is a long time to be trapped in an uncompetitive fixed rate. James Higgins, of Chamberlain de Broë, the independent financial adviser, said: "Go for a variable rate. Rates are cyc-

lical, and anyone who hit the bullet last year and went for a variable rate should see rates rise."

Vicki Burn, deputy editor of *Moneyfacts*, said: "I would not go for a fixed rate with an election in the offing and rising base rates." At first sight, fixed rates look tempting. A telephone survey of rates by *The Times* showed that variable-rate first and second-generation Tesses from all the main providers have fallen across the year, in some cases by significantly more than the 0.85 per cent fall in base rates. Some rates are starting to turn up again but only slightly.

All the following assume that savers have invested the maximum £9,000 over five years. Those still on their first Tessa at the Alliance & Leicester, for example, would have seen their variable rate fall over the year from 6.5 to 5.25 per cent now. Savers whose Tesses mature this year will be offered a new Tessa at a variable rate of 6.35 per cent, substantially lower than the 7.25 per cent offered to savers with accounts maturing this time last year.

Barclays, traditionally a poor performer in the Tessa stakes, has cut its rate on first-generation Tesses from 6.5 per cent to 5.75 per cent. This will rise to 6 per cent in the new year. The bank redeems itself slightly by offering a 6.25 per cent variable rate on its follow-up account to maturing Tessa savers this year. The Halifax, the largest society, was paying 6.7 per cent on its Tessa 1 at the beginning of January and is now paying 6.05 per cent. But both these rates include a maturity bonus. Without the bonus they fall to 5.9 and 5.45 per cent. Like the A&L, savers whose accounts



Another harvest safely in: like wheatfields, some Tesses have cropped heavily while others barely paid their way

mature this year are offered a minimally better variable rate on Tessa 2, of 6.24 per cent including bonus.

But some institutions, particularly banks, seem to be keen to add insult to injury to savers with maturing Tesses. At Lloyds, Tessa 1 was paying 6.75 per cent in January this year and is now paying 6.25 per cent. The follow-up Tessa is paying the same, hardly an incentive to stay loyal. TSB, now part of Lloyds, has adopted the same strategy. According to *Moneyfacts*, the best variable rate on offer for those with maturing Tessa is from the National Counties Building Society, at 7.2 per cent. The

minimum investment is £9,000. West Bromwich is paying 7 per cent on a minimum of £250. The C&G and Birmingham Midshires are also paying 7 per cent, on minimum investments of £9,000 and £1,000.

The real action, for the financial institutions at least, is on the fixed-rate side. Rising interest rates mean some institutions have refinanced fixed-rate deals to give savers better rates. According to *Moneyfacts*, the savings guide, the West Bromwich Building Society and NatWest Bank are best buys on the fixed-rate side, paying a fixed rate of 7.45 per cent on minimum balances of £3,000 and

£5,500 respectively. The Yorkshire Bank is paying 7.3 per cent on £9,000.

Given the poor record of Tessa providers in offering good variable rates, many savers will be tempted towards a fixed rate. Last time round, there were almost no fixed rates as interest rates were too high to make the offer of a fixed rate profitable. But what looks a good rate now may not be if rates rise over the next five years.

Mark Dampier, of Churchill Investments, the independent financial adviser, said: "It won't take much for variable rates to rise above fixed rates. There isn't that much difference."

Projected maturity values of variable rate Tesses at January 1, 1997, assuming that the maximum investment was made on opening (January 1, 1992) and maximum top-ups made on each anniversary.

LARGER INSTITUTIONS

Abbey National	£11,478.94
Alliance & Leicester BS	£11,373.48
Bank of Scotland	£11,094.76
Bank	£11,294.12
Birmingham Midshires BS	£11,311.29
Bradford & Bingley BS (High Return)	£11,338.31
Bristol & West BS (Bonus)	£11,543.00
Britannia BS	£11,513.39
Cheltenham BS	£11,452.93
Chesham & Gloucester	£11,508.32
Co-operative Bank	£10,839.82
Courts & Co	£11,296.25
First Direct	£11,217.32
Halifax BS	£11,388.09
Leeds & Holbeck BS	£11,482.77
Lloyds Bank	£11,223.54
Lloyds Bank (Option)	£11,279.73
Midland Bank	£11,008.65
National Counties BS	£11,744.68
Nationswide BS	£11,441.68
NatWest Bank	£11,325.00
Northern Rock BS	£11,419.62
Novich & Peterborough BS	£11,438.22
Portman BS	£11,459.01
Robert Fleming/S&P	£11,136.08
Royal Bank of Scotland	£11,477.65
Shipton BS	£11,422.38
Shoed & Swindon BS	£11,542.03
Sun Banking Corporation	£11,545.33
TSB	£11,613.28
West Bromwich BS	£11,598.96
Woodwich BS	£11,829.38
Yorkshire Bank	£11,275.23
Yorkshire BS	£11,546.68

TOP MATURING TESSAS

Rank/Company	Value
1) Chesham BS	£11,953.65
2) Henley Economic BS	£11,917.62
3) Julian Hodge Bank	£11,804.37
4) Allied Trust Bank (now Investec)	£11,779.33
5) Buckinghamshire BS	£11,774.00
6) Melton Montrose BS	£11,753.94
7) National Counties BS	£11,744.68
8) Tipton & Conesley BS	£11,729.77
9) Dunfermline BS	£11,728.61
10) Verdon BS	£11,710.73
11) Cheshire BS	£11,705.30
12) Monmouthshire BS	£11,701.81
13) Exeter Bank	£11,681.94
14) Leopold Joseph & Sons	£11,683.78
15) Holtsdale BS	£11,676.04

BOTTOM MATURING TESSAS

Rank/Company	Value
76) Lloyds Bank (Option)	£11,276.73
77) Yorkshire Bank	£11,275.23
78) Yorkshire Bank	£11,234.12
79) Ulster Bank (NI)	£11,228.44
80) Lloyds Bank	£11,223.54
81) First Direct	£11,217.32
82) Leeds United BS	£11,186.00
83) Robert Fleming/S&P	£11,136.08
84) Clydesdale Bank	£11,100.82
85) Bank of Scotland	£11,083.75
86) Northern Bank (NI)	£11,083.00
87) Cater Allen Bank	£11,064.96
88) Bank of Ireland (NI)	£11,022.17
89) Midland Bank	£11,008.65
90) Co-operative Bank	£10,839.82

Source: Moneyfacts

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Investment (£)	Company	Standard Rate (%)
1 Year		
5,000	Financial Assur	5.30
10,000	Premium Life	5.50
20,000	Premium Life	5.70
50,000	Premium Life	5.80
2 Years		
1,000	Premium Life	5.15
10,000	Premium Life	5.35
20,000	Premium Life	5.55
50,000	Premium Life	5.75
3 Years		
1,000	Premium Life	5.60
10,000	Premium Life	5.80
20,000	Premium Life	6.00
50,000	Premium Life	6.20
4 Years		
1,000	Premium Life	5.85
10,000	Premium Life	6.05
20,000	Premium Life	6.25
50,000	Premium Life	6.45
5 Years		
1,000	Premium Life	5.90
10,000	Premium Life	6.10
20,000	Premium Life	6.30
50,000	Premium Life	6.50

Source: Charitable and Social (0171) 434 4822. Net rates, income and capital guaranteed. Early surrender. Terms vary. Monthly income may be available.

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Scarborough BS 0800 590578	Instant	£500	5.70	%Yy
Bristol & West BS 0800 901109	Instant	£10,000	6.00	%Yy
Bristol & West BS 0800 901109	Instant	£25,000	6.05	%Yy

Account	Notice of term	Deposit	Rate	Interest paid
Cheltenham & Glos 0800 717505	Direct 30 day p	£100	5.50	%Yy
First National BS 01232 314080	30 day	£25,000	6.45	%Yy
Leopold Bros & Sons 0171 588 2323	40 Day Notice	£10,000	6.22	%Yy
Leeds & Holbeck BS 0113 225 7777	30.4.88p	£10,000	7.00	OM

Account	Notice of term	Deposit	Rate	Interest paid
Sun Banking Corp 01438 744505	Fixed	£8,575	7.50	%Yy
WestWest Bank 0800 200400	Fixed	£5,000	7.45	%Yy
Birmingham Midshires 0645 720721	Fixed	£1,000	7.00	%Yy
West Bromwich BS 0900 143688	Fixed	£250	7.00	%Yy

CREDIT CARDS BEST BUYS

Credit cards	Card type	Interest per month	APR	Fee per annum
Co-operative Bank 0800 108000	Advantage Visa	0.64%NC	7.90%N	NIL
Capital One Bank 0800 689000	Capital One Visa	0.797%N	9.90%N	NIL
Robert Fleming/S&P 0800 829024	MasterCard/Visa	0.817%N	11.90%	NIL

PERSONAL LOANS BEST BUYS

PERSONAL LOANS	APR	Monthly payment on £3,000 for 3yrs no insurance
Northern Rock BS 0345 421421	12.90%N	£112.66
RBS Direct 0800 121125	14.00%	£114.78
Direct Line 0141 248 5905	14.80%E	£121.48

NIL C = no interest free period, E = Available to comprehensive motor insurance policy holders over 22 years, F = Fixed Rate (all other rates variable), H = Higher rate applies if insurance not arranged, N = Introductory rate for a limited period, OM = interest paid on maturity, P = By Post only

* RATES SHOWN ARE GROSS AND SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT NOTICE. PLEASE CHECK RATES BEFORE INVESTING

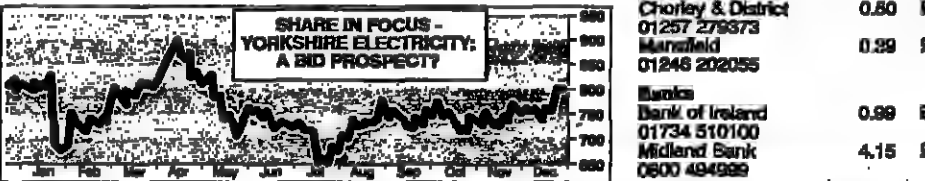
Source: Moneyfacts, the Monthly Guide to Investment & Mortgage Rates (01882 900 677)

PIBS

FIXED RATE	Gross coupon	Buying price	Gross yield	Issue price	Minimum purchase
Birmingham Midshires	8.375%	101.59	8.220	100.17	1,000
Bradford & Bingley	11.625%	123.91	9.382	100.13	10,000
Bradford & Bingley	13.000%	130.28	9.534	100.20	10,000
Bradford & Bingley	13.375%	142.83	9.378	100.34	1,000
Britannia	13.000%	136.83	8.384	100.42	1,000
Coventry	12.125%	130.89	8.230	100.75	1,000
First National	11.750%	122.91	8.560	100.25	10,000
Hallifax	12.000%	121.50	8.572	100.25	1,000
Hallifax	12.000%	131.22	8.877	100.28	50,000
Leeds & Holbeck	13.625%	149.81	9.055	100.00	60,000
Newcastle	13.375%	144.75	8.240	100.23	1,000
Newcastle	10.750%	117.68	8.123	100.22	1,000
Newcastle	12.625%	137.64	8.182	100.44	1,000
Northern Rock	12.625%	136.41	8.056	100.14	1,000
Skipton	12.875%	139.10	8.250	100.48	1,000

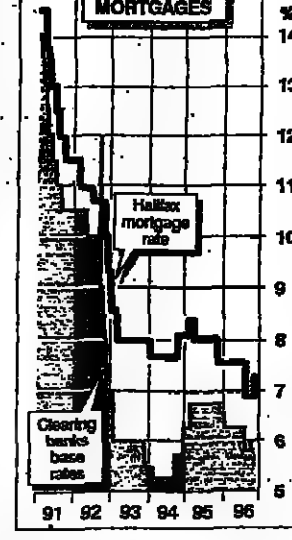
FLOATING RATE	Gross coupon	Buying price	Gross yield	Issue price	Minimum purchase
Cheshire (28/09/97) 038.415633		107.83	100.00	1,000	
First Nat (20/08/97) 8.46765%		101.83	100.00	1,000	

PIBS = Permanent Interest-Bearing Shares. Source: ABI AMRO Home Loans - 0171 601 0101



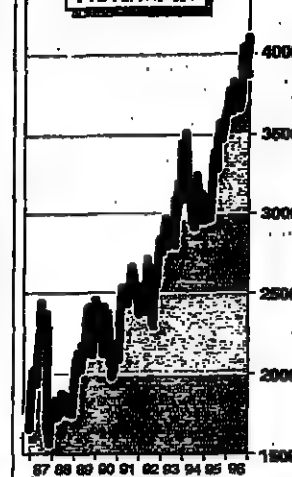
SHARE IN FOCUS: YORKSHIRE ELECTRICITY: A BID PROSPECT?

BASE RATES V MORTGAGES



Clearing banks base rate

FT-SE 100 PRICE INDEX



Source: Moneyfacts, the Monthly Guide to Investment & Mortgage Rates (01882 900 677)

LARGER LENDERS

Lender	Interest rate %	Loan size	Max %	Notes
Building Societies				
Bristol & West	3.24	£15-100k	95	4% disc-31.97
01344 394000				2% disc-22.59
Coventry	1.95	£15k+	90	Fixed 1.95%
0800 800808				to 1.107%
Nationwide	3.08	to £500k	75	Disc of 3.50%
0800 302010				for 1 year
Bank of Ireland	0.99	£20-145k	95	8.25% disc-6 mth
01734 510100				3% disc-6 mth
0800 494999				12 months

LARGER LOANS

Lender	Interest rate %	Loan size	Max %	Notes
Building Societies				
Scarborough	0.25	£30-100k	95	6.99% disc-6mth
0800 590547				2% disc-0.5% 1-yr
Chorley & District	0.80	£50-120k	90	6% discount for
01257 275573				monthly
Manulife	0.39	£75-125k	90	6.25% disc-6mth
01246 202055				2% disc-1% 1-yr
Bank of Ireland	0.99	£20-145k	95	8.25% disc-6 mth
01734 510100				3% disc-6 mth
Midland Bank	4.15	£50-100k	95	3% discount for
0800 494999				1 year

For further details see Moneyfacts, the Monthly Guide to Investment & Mortgage Rates (01882 900 677)

PEP GUIDE

Investment A/c	Gross rate	At risk	Min. investment	Notice	Contact
Ordinary A/c	1.50	1.20	0.50	10-10,000	0845 845008
Investment A/c	4.75	3.80	2.85	20-500	0845 845008
Income Bond	6.00	4.80	3,600,000-25,000	3mth	0845 845008
General A/c	6.00	4.80	3,601,000-100,000	3mth	0845 845008
40p Issue Cert	6.35			25-10,000	0845 845008
Children's Bond	6.75			25-1,000	0845 845008
Gen Ext Rate	3.51			1mth	0845 845008
Capital Bonds	6.65	5.32	3.98	100-250,000	0845 845008
9th Index Unit	2.50			100-10,000	0845 845008
Pensions Bond	5.70	5.60	4.20	500-50,000	0845 845008

1st £70 (£140) of interest free, then 20% to £100. Additional charge up to £20,000 for interest free periods. 1% tax. *Rates gross and include adviser's fee for 5 years. 0.2% net bonus for £20,000+ *£100,000 in addition to £1 and £2 holdings. *Taxable but not in last. *£500-100,000 earn higher rates. *Fixed rate apply.

All figures are the gross annual annuity (£100,000 purchase), guaranteed 5 years, paid monthly in advance

SINGLE LIFE (level ann)

Company	Level	Age 60	Age 65	Age 70
Canada Life	Level	£9,901	£10,976	£12,444
Prudential	Level	£9,880	£10,988	£12,436
General	Level	£9,844	£10,944	£12,408
Standard Life	Level	£9,776	£10,844	£12,248
Equitable Life	Level	£9,905	£10,824	£12,027

SINGLE LIFE (level ann)

Company	Level	Age 60	Age 65	Age 70
Canada Life	Level	£9,207	£10,009	£11,188
Prudential	Level	£9,204	£9,956	£11,055
General	Level	£9,190	£9,903	£10,983
Sun Life of Can	Level	£9,080	£9,792	£10,884
General Acc	Level	£9,907	£9,691	£10,837

JOINT LIFE, 2/3 WIDOWS

Company	Level	Age 60	Age 65	Age 70
Canada Life	Level	£9,786	£9,938	£10,727
Prudential	Level	£9,798	£9,957	£10,184
General	Level	£9,826	£9,952	£10,114
Equitable Life	Level	£9,880	£9,186	£9,908
Norwich Un	Level	£7,948	£8,533	£9,359

Source: Annuity Direct (0171) 688 5383

Statistics compiled by Lizanne Rose

LARGER LENDERS

Lender	Interest rate %	Loan size	Max %	Notes
Building Societies				
Bristol & West	1.95	£15k+	95	5.04% disc-6 mth
0800 608088				then 1% disc-8mth
Coventry	5.11	to £125k	95	2.14% discount
0800 125125				for 12 months
Lambeth	3.99	£15-150k	95	3.22% discount
0171 928 1331				for 12 months
Bank of Ireland	0.99	£20-145k	95	8.25% disc-6 mth
01734 510100				3% disc-6 mth
TSB Bank	5.51	£15k+	95	3.74% discount
0800 758000				for 12 months

Larger lenders, larger loans and first-time buyers tables by City's Guides Ltd. (01753) 604485

PEP GUIDE

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Norwich Un	Level	£7,948	£8,533	£9,359

Source: Annuity Direct (01

The professionals pick their top trusts for the coming year

All the experts Weekend Money called are tipping UK smaller companies, Europe and the Far East as the best sectors to find next year's star funds. For the more experienced, there are several "bargain" investment trusts with their shares at a discount.

IAN MILLWARD, of Chase de Vere, said: "The UK market is high and people are waiting for a fall. If the timing worries you, taking up Henderson Investors' phase-in facility on its Peps could be a good idea. This will invest a £2,000 lump sum over three, six or 12 months. Schroder UK Enterprise, run by Jim Cox, an aggressively managed fund focusing on 30-40 stocks is a good fund. Europe is a good market to diversify into. It is mature like the UK, but 12-18 months behind the UK in economic cycle, and should have room for growth, especially with more integration. Two good managers are Fidelity and Jupiter. The Far East, excluding Japan, is not for the cautious, being volatile but with strong growth potential." Try Schroders Pacific Growth.

ANDREW JONES, of the David Aaron Partnership, said: "If Wall Street does have a 5 per cent correction, the UK is likely to follow and smaller and medium stocks will offer the best protection. Mercury Recovery is aggressively managed and has the ability to switch between blue chips and small stocks. With smaller companies I also like to go for smaller funds — big funds have to hold so many stocks they can rarely do anything interesting. River & Mercantile First Growth has only £10 million of assets but is managed by Jeremy Lang, who is very good at finding unexpected earnings growth."

MIKE OWEN, of Plan Invest, said: "Once again, 1996 was the year of the blue chip. Next year could be different. Europe and South-East Asia are useful if you have a UK-based portfolio." He likes Credit Suisse Smaller Companies, Invesco European and GT Orient "has done well and with up to half of its portfolio in Hong Kong and China is in the right place to benefit from the end of colonial rule next year."

CLIVE SCOTT-HOPKINS, of Towry Law, tipped Barings Europe Select and Perpetual Asian Smaller Markets.

TIM COCKERILL, of Whitchurch Securities, said: "I look to two funds in the UK. GT Income, run by Nick Train, has had lots of attention, but I expect him to stay in the first quartile even if the performance falls off. Or, less well known, but among the top for 10 years, Lazards UK Income, yields 5 per cent under Tim Russell."

GRAHAM HOOPER, of Chase de Vere, said: "HTR Witan is a good general international fund with a wide spread of markets standing at a 14 per cent discount. More popular now, though it invests in volatile areas, is Templeton Emerging Markets, run by Mark Mobius."

MARK FLAWN THOMAS, of Chartfield, said: "Invesco Enterprise investment trust invests in UK smaller companies, a sector which has got left behind recently and is due to recover. Investors can get a double whammy from this fund because it is standing at a 25 per cent discount because Lazards, the previous manager, didn't do a good job until the end. Watch out for Mercury European Privatisation Investment Trust (Mepit). SBC Warburg has a £100 million stake and may put pressure on Mercury to follow Kleinwort Benson's example and unlist. This would immediately give a 14 per cent uplift."

TIM COCKERILL said: "Prolife Income Trust. Manager Tim Gregory is very good at finding success stories early like RJB and Spirax Sarco. It is now at a small premium and yields 4 per cent."

CLIVE SCOTT-HOPKINS said: "My favourite is Scottish Eastern, run by Martin Currie. It is a general international trust with a bias to the Far East. It is also at a 15 per cent discount. For a bit of a punt try Fleming Chinese, which is at a 20 per cent discount but with quite a health warning. It is better to have international spread than to try to be clever and to go for a single country as you can come unstuck." Investment or unit trusts? Don't just seek discounts. Tim Cockerill said: "Ask yourself why is it at a discount? Look at the net asset value performance, maybe there is something buried in the portfolio. Unit trusts are best for the first time investor. If the market goes up, your unit goes up, which may not happen in an investment trust if market sentiment is against it — you're just holding a share — you need a buyer."

GAVIN LUMSDEN

Caroline Merrell examines the implications of the euro for investors

Confused by single currency?

The months of debate about the single currency reached a climax earlier this month with the unveiling of the new euro. However, these newly printed notes will, for the time being, remain only symbolic. The present UK Government is taking a "wait-and-see" attitude to the single currency — it prefers to monitor how the other European nations fare before deciding on whether to participate.

The debate about Europe, the single currency and the implications for the British economy is a divisive topic. No clear consensus exists about whether it is better to join, stay out with the option of joining later or stay out completely. Labour is seemingly more favourably inclined towards Europe and has pledged to hold a referendum on the subject.

From the corridors of power, investors have no clear idea of the implications of joining or staying out of the single currency. However, the consequences could be more wide-reaching for unit and investment trusts than previously considered.

Q What happens if we stay out of the single currency?

A Strangely enough, some City experts believe that staying out of the single currency will mean very little change. The Government has managed to win assurances from Europe that there will be no trade sanctions if the UK does not join. Sterling will simply have to put its wits against the euro. The pound is now climbing towards the level it was when the UK's membership of the exchange-rate mechanism was suspended, which makes exports dearer and imports cheaper.

Q What effect will the single currency have on gilts?

A Many unit trusts, pensions and insurance bonds invest heavily in government gilt-edged stocks, the yields of which are closely linked to movements in interest rates and inflation.

The current yield on UK government securities stands at a little more than 7 per cent. Unusually, the yields for longer-dated gilts — those with ten years or more to run — are similar to those with a shorter life of five years.

Joining the single currency would immediately bring some convergence with yields offered on German government bonds, the strongest member of the single currency — yields on these currently range from 4.4 per cent to 6.49 per cent. There could be a sharp rise in the price of UK gilts because of this difference.



The fact that bonds across Europe would be priced in the same currency would considerably reduce the risk of fluctuations caused by sterling's strength or weakness against a particular currency. For instance, at the moment, the strength of sterling against the mark means that any gains made in the German market will be wiped out by the exchange rate. Some funds guard against this through a process known as hedging. If the Government keeps the UK out of the single currency then

investing in the European bond market will continue to be subject to currency risk.

Q What effect will the single currency have on investing in European stocks?

A Again, a single European currency will mean that UK investors will be immune from the losses caused by the sudden surges in sterling against the other currencies in the European Union. However, it is equally possible for gains

to be made in currency movements — a single currency would prevent this.

Q What will be the knock-on effects of the move towards the single currency?

A Many of the other European countries have a long way to go before they are strong enough economically to join the single currency. Many are embarking on privatisation programmes to raise capital to pay off their debts.

Investors may be able to benefit from the sell-offs. For example, the recent privatisation of Deutsche Telekom followed a similar pattern to those of UK privatisations. And while it was almost impossible for UK investors to get stock directly, many will have benefited from investing in unit trusts and investment trusts that bid for the shares. The costs of fund management could also go down because it will no longer be necessary to hedge funds against currency fluctuations.

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Manager of Framlington Health Fund
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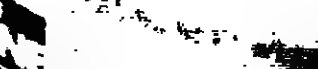
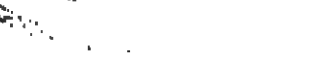
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Figure 7.

On Acorn	49.44	49.25	+ 0.21	6.58
	51.92	51.18	+ 0.22	8.58

Source: FI Informatics

* Yield expressed as CAR (Compound Annual Return);
 † Ex dividend; ‡ Middle price; ... No significant data.
 ‡ Ex dividend; ‡ Middle price; ... No significant data.



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Abbey National Benefit Consultants Ltd
Adco Instruments & Controls Ltd
AcademyProced
Accountancy Group
Av Movement Design Ltd
Aeromax
Allen Steel (Asset Management) Ltd
Alcon Stewart Partnership
Alcon Securities U.K. Ltd
Alcon Associates
Alliance & Listerbank/Glaxo Bank
Allen Dunbar
Almex (West Midlands Region)
Altus Dorset (Yorkshire Region)
Allen Dunbar Assurance (Home Office)
Allen Dunbar Assurance (Swindon)
Altop Financial Services
Alme & Young
Alpha Precision Engineering (Poole) Ltd
Altop Wilton
Alvaflex UK Ltd
Alvie Plc
Anaco (UK) Exploration Company
Anglo Hot Construction Ltd
Apollo Metals (UK) Limited
Apollo Video Film Hire Ltd
Armstrong Oliver Bradford
Applied Communications Inc Ltd
Asia-Gas (Valves & Fittings) Ltd
Arthur Leisure
Armstrong Watson & Co
Arthur Andersen
Asdown Hurrely & Co
Asset Management Services
Associated Laundry Ltd
Associated Nursing Services Plc
Association Clubs & Co Ltd
Association of Independent Tobacco Specialists
Atlas Elektronik
Avis Rent A Car
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Avon Insurance
B E W (Auto Products) Ltd
B H S
B I The Park Hospital
B P Chemicals
B P Oil UK Ltd
B R Midson Group Limited
BASIP Plc Colwyn & Specialise Div
BP Oils (UK) Ltd
BP Star Heywood
BRD (UK) Ltd
Buckley
Buki Hogg
Balfour Beatty
Bank of Montreal
Banque Paribas
Barclaycard
Barclays Bank
Barclays Bank / Clayton Hyde
Barclays Bank South East Region
Barclays Life Assurance Co Ltd
Barlings Vehicle Management Services
Barling International Communications Ltd
Basel Waters Limited
Bates Western
Bayer Plc
Beachcroft Stearings
Beacons Business Interiors
Bed & Wilson (UK) Plc
Bennell Brosks & Co Limited
Benny Limited
Benson McDermott Henderson
Berlin Leighton
Bernie Horner
Birmingham Manufacturing Jewellers Ltd
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Bick Plc
Blackcircle Video UK Ltd
Blue Circle Industries Plc
Booth Walkin Associates Ltd
Bosch Europe Ltd
Bowater Business Points
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British Medical
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British Racing Group
British Steel Plc
Brownlie & Glen Co. Ltd
Brown Shaker & Co Ltd
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Burford Precision Engineers Ltd
Burness Heath & Associates Ltd
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C-C-G Group Ltd
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RUGBY UNION

Saracens top their bill with Pienaar

By DAVID HANDS, RUGBY CORRESPONDENT

ALL good things come in threes, so perhaps it was only to be expected that Saracens were holding something back when they appeared to rest content after signing the world's leading points scorer and the world's most-capped player. Today, though, Michael Lynagh, of Australia, and Philippe Sella, from France, will be joined at Enfield by the man who last year held the World Cup aloft on behalf of South Africa — Francois Pienaar.

This is not to imply that such signings as Kyran Bracken, Paddy Johns or Tony Daly

Liam Botham could make his first appearance in the Courage Clubs Championship first division for West Hartlepool at London Irish today. Botham, who recently signed a three-year contract, is a possible replacement for Mark Ring, who is recovering from a dislocated shoulder.

are insignificant, but not one of those international players would claim to have made the impact on the global game of Lynagh, Sella or Pienaar, who today makes his first appearance for Saracens against Orrell, the lowest club in the first division of the Courage Clubs Championship.

According to Mark Evans, the Saracens coach, his club now has "the best back row in the country". Evans, of course, has been in the game too long not to know that exceptional units take time to mature together and that Pienaar — for all his international experience — will have to pick up different lines of running before he, Tony Diprose and Richard Hill begin to work effectively.

Yet, with Pienaar alongside and Lynagh behind, this could prove the final layer of class that will project Bracken back into the England side at scrum half and bring both Diprose and Hill into the final analysis. England's back row is hardly settled, a genuine open-side flanker is badly required, and Hill could fit that bill; similarly, Diprose was a successful captain and No 8 for England A last season and, though Chris Sheasby has leapfrogged him, he remains a contender.

It should be the making of Diprose as a captain: if he can handle a club side that includes two World Cup captains in Lynagh and Pienaar, the future can surely hold no terrors. Moreover, Pienaar, an intelligent, articulate man, will realise how delicately he must tread both in building a relationship with his new colleagues and finding his way into the British club game, which will be unlike anything he has experienced before with Transvaal or South Africa.

"It's an adventure for me," Pienaar said, which is as much the key to his coming to north London as anything else. It may be the final sporting adventure before he settles into the business life of middle age that could well include a political career. Pienaar will be 30 on Thursday and, although he insists no doors are closed between him and the national team that he represented with such distinction, the prospect of him adding to his 29 caps seems distant, particularly since Andre Markgraaf, the South Africa manager-coach, is on record as saying that Pienaar does not figure in his long-term plans.

Pienaar appreciates the degree to which he is seen as a role model and his ambition is



Pienaar, who won the World Cup with South Africa, adds his wealth of experience to an all-star cast at Enfield

to represent South Africa well while he is in London for the next 2½ years. Yet there has also been a conscious severance with what has gone before. "You start afresh, start something into the sport which has made me a hero in South Africa and, when I go back home, I'll put my experience of England to great use."

There is the sense, too, that Pienaar needs to re-establish his rugby credentials. They were called into question by the manner of his departure from the international game, the abrupt discovery last October that there was no place for him in South Africa's touring side, as captain or player. "My appetite for rugby has grown since the captaincy issue arose," he said. "Everyone gets dropped somewhere down the line and it's how you handle it that makes the difference."

Pienaar's response has been to accept one of several offers to play in the northern hemisphere, to prove himself in a new rugby culture yet, at the same time, one that will prove less draining, simply because rugby does not command as much attention here as in his native country. Pienaar, once the idol of South Africa, can be a private individual once more and Saracens, the focal point of his sporting life now, may be the beneficiaries.

Opportunity for London pride to end old year in full bloom

By DAVID HANDS

AFTER the mishmash of fixtures which have taken place over the past two months, the England team management can now contemplate five sustained weekends of domestic competition. Given the mixed international results before Christmas, it could be argued that they desperately need to reconsider their options.

There are significant encounters at the top and bottom of the first division of the Courage Clubs Championship this weekend and most of them are in London. Harlequins, aglow with yet another new signing, await the arrival of Leicester, the leaders, at the Stoop Memorial Ground, eager to extract revenge for the quarter-final defeat in the Heineken Cup last month.

Down the road at Sunbury, two of the division's stragglers, London Irish and West Hartlepool, clash; each club has only one league success this season — like Orrell, who take their slim record to Saracens — and need to inject some life into the campaign if they are to avoid relegation in a season in which, unless the rules are changed yet again, four clubs will go down.

When the league grinds to a halt in April, could it be Wasps who will claim the honours? Leicester lead now but Wasps, on the same number of points, have a game in hand and, if they beat Northampton at Loftus Road today, they will face the new year with equanimity. Gareth Rees, the Canada international, is restored at full back and Wasps continue to drop large hints to England by playing Lawrence Dallaglio, their captain, at blind-side flanker.

Northampton include two New Zealanders in their pack: Jason Chandler, from Auckland, continues at lock but is joined today by Gavin Walsh, a tight-head prop who has played for Auckland and North Harbour. At 30, Walsh is no spring chicken but he is preferred to the newly-capped Scot, Matt Stewart, who may be joined on the sidelines by his national captain, Gregor Townsend, who is carrying

a variety of bumps and bruises. Only Jim Staples is absent from Harlequins' usual line-up, his place at full back going to Steve Pilgrim, but Leicester's plans have been upset by shoulder injuries to Stuart Potter and Rob Liley. Leon Lloyd switches to Potter's place in the centre, leaving room on the wing for Rory Underwood, and Niall Malone comes in at stand-off. "We're top," Bob Dwyer, Leicester's director of rugby, said, "but we have lost two matches and Wasps only one — it just doesn't mean anything at the moment."

Tomorrow, Philip de Glanville takes his Bath side to Sale, who have restored David Rees to the wing of his starting try in the Pilkington Cup against Richmond. Bristol also hope that Sunday rugby will restore morale. Surely their visitors are Gloucester, though, that will be easier said than done. Gloucester restore Nathan Carter to their back row.

Leicester minds may be straying to their Heineken Cup semi-final with Toulouse in a week's time, but no more so than Cardiff, who travel to Brive in the same competition. Desperate to ensure that frost does not prevent today's Welsh League fixture with Pontypridd taking place, Cardiff have asked permission of the Welsh Rugby Union to use the international ground next door, if necessary, and the under-soil heating has been switched on.

Confirmation that the game can go ahead will be greeted with relief by Gwyn Jones, the flanker, whose last game was for Wales against Australia in June.

Since then Jones has moved from Llanelli and recovered from a shoulder injury. He would have made his debut for Cardiff against Swansea last week but for the strike by Welsh referees. Now he has a belated chance not only to play in Europe but to challenge for the place in the national side that he occupied throughout last season.

SKIING: AUSTRIANS SET PACE AS MEN'S WORLD CUP CIRCUIT MOVES TO ITALY

Franz leads way from team-mate Strobl

WERNER FRANZ led Fritz Strobl, his Austrian team-mate, in the first training run for the World Cup downhill race in Bormio tomorrow. Franz, 24, completed the Stelvio course in 2min 00.91sec, beating Strobl by 0.89sec.

Peter Runggaldier, of Italy, had the third-fastest time of the day, ahead of Ales Skaardal, of Norway, down the steep and icy course that hosted the 1985 world championships and the world cup finals in 1995.

Luc Alphand, of France, and Kristian Ghedina, of Italy, the winners of the two downhill races in Val Gardena last week, came fifth and sixth respectively.

Nicolas Burtin, of France, was taken to hospital with a suspected fracture of the shin-bone and torn ligaments in his right knee after crashing heavily.

Claudia Riegler's new slalom technique, which has enabled her to outclass her rivals this season, could bring her another brace of victories in the women's

World Cup this weekend. Austrian-born Riegler, who chose to race for New Zealand, her mother's country, after a disagreement with her native federation, has won both slaloms so far this season.

Riegler, 20, finished first in Park City and Crans Montana, edging out Pernilla Wiberg, of Sweden, on both occasions. Wiberg's, whose sights are set on capturing the overall World Cup title for the first time, is only 32 points behind Katja Seizinger, the leader and champion.

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ROAD RUNNING: Winton (5m) Marc 1, D. Gibbons (Blackpool Harrier) 2min 30sec; 10m: M. Gibbons (Blackpool Harrier) 5min 14.3; 15m: P. J. Fagan (Blackpool Harrier) 7min 55.2; 20m: M. Gibbons (Blackpool Harrier) 10min 45.2; 25m: M. Gibbons (Blackpool Harrier) 13min 35.2; 30m: M. Gibbons (Blackpool Harrier) 16min 25.2; 35m: M. Gibbons (Blackpool Harrier) 19min 15.2; 40m: M. Gibbons (Blackpool Harrier) 22min 05.2; 45m: M. Gibbons (Blackpool Harrier) 24min 55.2; 50m: M. Gibbons (Blackpool Harrier) 27min 45.2; 55m: M. Gibbons (Blackpool Harrier) 30min 35.2; 60m: M. Gibbons (Blackpool Harrier) 33min 25.2; 65m: M. Gibbons (Blackpool Harrier) 36min 15.2; 70m: M. Gibbons (Blackpool Harrier) 39min 05.2; 75m: M. Gibbons (Blackpool Harrier) 41min 55.2; 80m: M. Gibbons (Blackpool Harrier) 44min 45.2; 85m: M. Gibbons (Blackpool Harrier) 47min 35.2; 90m: M. Gibbons (Blackpool Harrier) 50min 25.2; 95m: M. Gibbons (Blackpool Harrier) 53min 15.2; 100m: M. Gibbons (Blackpool Harrier) 56min 05.2; 105m: M. Gibbons (Blackpool Harrier) 58min 55.2; 110m: M. Gibbons (Blackpool Harrier) 61min 45.2; 115m: M. Gibbons (Blackpool Harrier) 64min 35.2; 120m: M. Gibbons (Blackpool Harrier) 67min 25.2; 125m: M. Gibbons (Blackpool Harrier) 70min 15.2; 130m: M. Gibbons (Blackpool Harrier) 73min 05.2; 135m: M. Gibbons (Blackpool Harrier) 75min 55.2; 140m: M. Gibbons (Blackpool Harrier) 78min 45.2; 145m: M. Gibbons (Blackpool Harrier) 81min 35.2; 150m: M. Gibbons (Blackpool Harrier) 84min 25.2; 155m: M. Gibbons (Blackpool Harrier) 87min 15.2; 160m: M. Gibbons (Blackpool Harrier) 90min 05.2; 165m: M. Gibbons (Blackpool Harrier) 92min 55.2; 170m: M. Gibbons (Blackpool Harrier) 95min 45.2; 175m: M. Gibbons (Blackpool Harrier) 98min 35.2; 180m: M. Gibbons (Blackpool Harrier) 101min 25.2; 185m: M. Gibbons (Blackpool Harrier) 104min 15.2; 190m: M. Gibbons (Blackpool Harrier) 107min 05.2; 195m: M. Gibbons (Blackpool Harrier) 110min 55.2; 200m: M. Gibbons (Blackpool Harrier) 113min 45.2; 205m: M. 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Gibbons (Blackpool Harrier) 173min 15.2; 310m: M. Gibbons (Blackpool Harrier) 176min 05.2; 315m: M. Gibbons (Blackpool Harrier) 178min 55.2; 320m: M. Gibbons (Blackpool Harrier) 181min 45.2; 325m: M. Gibbons (Blackpool Harrier) 184min 35.2; 330m: M. Gibbons (Blackpool Harrier) 187min 25.2; 335m: M. Gibbons (Blackpool Harrier) 190min 15.2; 340m: M. Gibbons (Blackpool Harrier) 193min 05.2; 345m: M. Gibbons (Blackpool Harrier) 195min 55.2; 350m: M. Gibbons (Blackpool Harrier) 198min 45.2; 355m: M. Gibbons (Blackpool Harrier) 201min 35.2; 360m: M. Gibbons (Blackpool Harrier) 204min 25.2; 365m: M. Gibbons (Blackpool Harrier) 207min 15.2; 370m: M. Gibbons (Blackpool Harrier) 210min 05.2; 375m: M. Gibbons (Blackpool Harrier) 212min 55.2; 380m: M. Gibbons (Blackpool Harrier) 215min 45.2; 385m: M. Gibbons (Blackpool Harrier) 218min 35.2; 390m: M. Gibbons (Blackpool Harrier) 221min 25.2; 395m: M. Gibbons (Blackpool Harrier) 224min 15.2; 400m: M. Gibbons (Blackpool Harrier) 227min 05.2; 405m: M. 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Opportunity to
London pride
to end old year
in full bloom

Oliver Holt continues a series in which *Times* sports writers recall the best of 1996

Clenched fist that struck a mighty blow for patriotism

Even when autumn came and memories of the European football championship faded with the leaves, they did not replace the poster. High above the Shepherd's Bush Road in west London, Stuart Pearce stared down at the rush-hour traffic every morning as it inched its way towards Hammer-smith Broadway, his clenched fist a metaphor for the frustrations building up below.

By then, they were also selling postcards of him in the same pose. I bought some of them at a shop in Covent Garden, meaning to send them to friends living abroad. In wilder moments, I thought I might even put one on a wall in our study. Then I slipped them into a box or put them in a drawer. I do not remember which.

The poster has gone now, and I cannot find the cards — but I can still see Pearce turning away and punching his fist towards the crowd after he scored that third England penalty at the end of 120 minutes of goalless play against Spain in the quarter-finals at Wembley.

The image is locked away in the football side of my mind, next to Paolo Rossi scoring for Juventus against Aston Villa the first time I saw him play live, and Frank Stapleton volleying a last-minute winner for Manchester United against Everton in the FA Cup sixth round more than a decade ago.

In some ways, it seems strange that a moment from that match against Spain, sandwiched as it was between the joyous demolition of Holland and the agonising failure to beat Germany, superseded all else last summer. But then, the win over Holland was easy, almost a trifle, and, well, the past 30 years have been measured in footballing losses to Germany. There was something more visceral about Spain.

By that time, the fervour that had grown slowly after the opening draw with Switzerland and then leapt forward with the wins over Scotland and Holland, had created a heady but unfamiliar



unity in England. The cross of St George seemed to be pinned on every other rear windscreen. The theme tune of the tournament, *Three Lions (Football's Coming Home)*, blared from every radio and boomed out at the end of every game. Nobody wanted it to end.

Suddenly, even those of us who have been weaned away from the wonderful highs and terrible lows of outright partisanship were catapulted back into the trembling

'The fear of losing became immediate, and nothing creates excitement like fear'

nervousness that comes with allying oneself totally to a cause.

The penalties at the end of that game against Spain reminded me of what it was like to feel sheer, unfettered elation at a football match, something I had not felt since college and distance ripped Manchester, and Stockport County, away from me, since the atmosphere at stadiums was still by the demolition of the terraces.

I was discovering what it was like to leap up unashamedly in a press box and see others leaping up with you; others, in fact, outdoing you, shaking hands and hugging each other. In those few minutes, the fear of losing became

immediate for the first time in the tournament, and nothing creates excitement like fear.

It was a strange game in normal time, a strange atmosphere. After the destruction of Holland, England had been expected to beat Spain comfortably and everyone was already looking forward to the rematch against the Germans in the semi-final and the chance of revenge for England's defeat, on penalties, in the World Cup semi-final six years earlier.

In fact, England were lucky to survive the first 90 minutes. Bobby Robson, the former England manager, had warned that it would be like learning a new dance after waiting past the Dutch, that the English would have to master the *paseo doble* if they were to be left holding the floor at the end of the match.

In the 34th minute, England had their first reprieve when Salinas latched on to Hierro's misfired shot and sidefooted it past Seaman. A linesman's flag ruled him offside but action replays showed it was a legitimate goal. On the left, Sergi was giving Gary Neville a torrid time and, four minutes before half-time, England had their second great escape when Marjanin beat their offside trap but failed to thread the ball past Seaman as the goalkeeper rushed out.

The match tightened up even more in the second half and the arrival of extra time, the first time the new "golden goal" rule had been brought into play, only produced a frightened stalemate. Both teams regrouped in the centre circle to pick the penalty-takers.

Shearer put England's first kick high into the net and when Hierro tried to emulate him, his drive cannoned off the bar. Platt, the epitome of calm, sidefooted England's second penalty, wide of Zubizarreta, before Amor, with a halt in his run, rooted Seaman to the spot and converted Spain's second kick.

Then Pearce came marching forward. A fierce patriot, a player pilloried by the pundits for his lack



Kicking and screaming: Pearce invites the Wembley crowd to celebrate the public exorcism of the ghosts of Italia 90

of sophistication, he had never spoken openly about how much the miss against Germany in Turin had affected him. It seemed like an eternity before he began his run-up.

"It always feels like a long way when you walk up to take a penalty," Pearce said this week, but that day, walking up from the centre circle, it felt like it was about four miles.

"There was never any doubt in my mind, though. I take the penalties for my club, Nottingham Forest. I consider myself a penalty-taker. I told Terry Venables I wanted the third one and he gave it to me."

His kick sped like a bullet low to Zubizarreta's left and bulged the corner of the net. Pearce walked over to the crowd and yelled at them, his lower jaw jutting out,

punching that fist through the air again and again. He was still doing it when he got back to the halfway line.

Gascoigne scored from the next England kick and then Seaman saved from Nadal, and it was all over. Seaman got much of the attention afterwards but it was that image of Pearce that became the defining moment of the tournament, just as Gascoigne's tears

had been in 1990. In an era when the motives, loyalties and behaviour of high-earning players are constantly criticised, here, at last, was proof of how much it meant to at least one of them.

For Pearce, it brought redemption after six years in his own purgatory. For many of those who stared down from the stands, it carried its own kind of emancipation, too.

ICE HOCKEY: CARDIFF VICTORY MARRED BY CALL FOR DISCIPLINARY ACTION

Thornton takes Devils back to top

By NORMAN DE MESQUITA

A GOAL by Steve Thornton to complete his hat-trick 45 seconds into overtime gave Cardiff Devils a 3-2 win over Sheffield Steelers and took them back to the top of the Superleague, a point ahead of Newcastle Cobras.

The game was marred, however, by an incident in the third period when Jamie Leach, Sheffield's leading scorer, suffered a double fracture of his left cheekbone. Shannon Hope, of Cardiff, was ejected for the high-sticking offence. The Steelers are to send a video of the incident to the Superleague's disciplinary chairman.

In the only other Boxing Day game, Nottingham Panthers beat Basingstoke Bison 4-1 to leapfrog them into fifth place and confirm their improved form since winning the Benson and Hedges Cup.

They have dropped only one point in four league games since the final.

With the halfway point reached in the first season of the Superleague, there is no doubt that the standard of play is better than in past years — particularly goalkeeping. However, there are aspects of this season that make it difficult to be overoptimistic about the long-term future of British ice hockey.

An eight-team league has its drawbacks, one of which is the inevitable repetition of fixtures. Sheffield Steelers versus Nottingham Panthers is the fiercest rivalry in the British game and used to guarantee capacity crowds. Yet these two teams have now met eight times in league and cup matches and, on their last visit to Sheffield, the Panthers played before more than 2,000 empty seats.

The cost of running a team

SUPERLEAGUE										
Club	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts	Goal Difference	Points per Game	Goal Difference
Cardiff	23	13	8	2	81	74	32	+7	1.39	+7
Nottingham	23	12	8	3	74	68	28	+6	1.22	+6
Sheffield	23	12	8	3	64	59	28	+5	1.22	+5
Nottingham	23	12	8	3	64	59	28	+5	1.22	+5
Nottingham	23	12	8	3	64	59	28	+5	1.22	+5
Nottingham	23	12	8	3	64	59	28	+5	1.22	+5
Nottingham	23	12	8	3	64	59	28	+5	1.22	+5
Nottingham	23	12	8	3	64	59	28	+5	1.22	+5
Nottingham	23	12	8	3	64	59	28	+5	1.22	+5
Nottingham	23	12	8	3	64	59	28	+5	1.22	+5

has escalated spectacularly, with the richer clubs spending freely and the other clubs feeling the need to try to keep up. Just how long clubs such as Basingstoke and Bracknell can stay competitive remains to be seen, but it may be significant that these two occupy two of the bottom three places.

The British Ice Hockey Association received a great deal of criticism in past years but, under its stewardship, the game had stability and excellent sponsorship.

Some disciplinary decisions were perhaps too lenient, but there was consistency. In contrast, the Superleague administration has shown itself to be inept and has made some extraordinary decisions with regard to discipline. In addition, it has changed its mind at least twice as to the format for the end-of-season play-offs.

Great Britain's dream of a return to the Olympic Games after an absence of 40 years has faded and one must hope that a more forward-looking selection policy will now be adopted for the national team.

Outside the Superleague, there are two separate competitions covering the northern and southern halves of the country, but several clubs are in trouble, notably in Hull, Peterborough and Dumfries. So the future is far from rosy as the season enters its second half.

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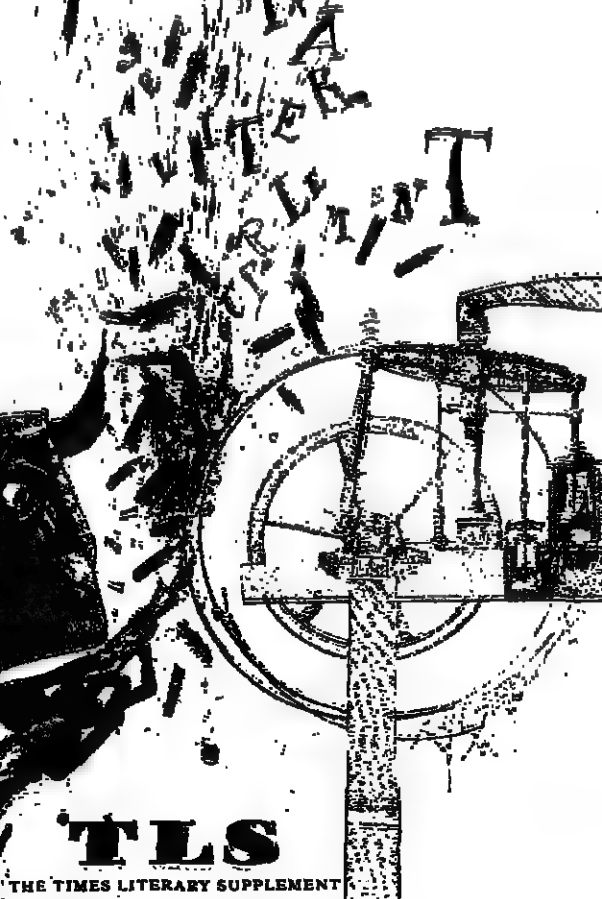
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CRICKET: ADAMS DEFIES AUSTRALIA'S BOWLERS IN THIRD TEST AFTER ANOTHER FAILURE BY LARA

West Indies' lead restricted by tireless McGrath

FROM MICHAEL HENDERSON IN MELBOURNE

MELBOURNE (second day of five): West Indies, with one first-innings wicket in hand, are 14 runs ahead of Australia

THOUGH it was tough sledding against Australian bowlers who allowed them no slack, West Indies chiselled out a slender lead by the end of the second day of this third Test. With two innings almost completed, the winners could declare themselves by Sunday night and, given what is known about the way these teams respond to pressure, Australia appear the more likely victors.

West Indies, who were 86 for four when Hooper ran himself out shortly after lunch, owe their first-innings lead to three men. Chanderpaul batted soberly for his 58, Murray favoured a more direct approach in making 53 and Adams, who has so far frustrated Australia for 57 overs, reached his own half-century towards the end of a day in which only 204 runs were scored, so niggardly was the bowling and so sharp the fielding.

Standing tallest among the bowlers was McGrath, who has taken five for 40 from 27 overs, an outstanding effort when one considers that Gillespie left the field with a side strain after bowling three overs, never to return. For the fourth time in five innings, McGrath captured Lara's wicket and, not one to grace in the outfield, it was his pick-up and throw from mid-on that accounted for Hooper.

Lara has fallen to McGrath six times in Tests, and seems to have no answer to the New South Welshman, who got him here in the over before lunch. West Indies' star batsman had clearly steered himself to play a big innings, taking 14 balls to get off the mark and showing a respect-

ful bat to Warne, who had just had Samuels snaffled with customary brilliance by Taylor at slip.

Switching to bowl round the wicket, McGrath persuaded Lara to attempt a drive without fully adjusting his balance and his half-cock stroke gave Warne a comfortable catch at fourth slip. It might be more truthful to call that position 3A, because there was room to drive a bus between Mark Waugh at second, and where Warne was standing. Altogether this was fine bowling and fine field-setting by Taylor, whose deployment of resources is masterly.

Even in his moderate form, Lara's wicket remains the one that bowlers covet, and West Indies could not really afford that loss. Hooper, that elegant underachiever, has never been a man to rely on and nobody was greatly surprised when he chose to donate his wicket to the Australian cause. Warne fielding McGrath's neat throw by the stumps as the desperate Guyanese finished distinctly second best.

There was no keeping McGrath out of the action. When Chanderpaul tried to

drive him down the ground, McGrath stuck out his left hand and held a magnificent return catch. When those catches stick, there is always an element of luck, but he had more than earned it for the persistence and sharpness of his bowling.

Another wicket then, and West Indies would really have been up a gum-tree. Instead, Murray put bat to ball in his uncomplicated style, and Adams, who has been woefully short of form, tried to rediscover it by occupying the crease. By batting through to stumps, Adams played his part admirably.

In 30 overs together, he and Murray added 90 for the sixth wicket, and it took the new ball to separate them. Murray had not passed up many invitations to hook, and McGrath was always looking to get him on the back foot. This time, "fetching" the ball from off stump, Murray top-edged a straightforward catch to Reifel, running round the boundary at long leg.

When, in his next over, McGrath followed up two short balls at Bishop with a full-length one that left the batsman defenceless to a shout for leg-before, West Indies were 23 runs short of the lead. They were still four runs behind when Ambrose, shaping to cut Warne, missed a leg break, and had just gone ahead when Reifel bowled Benjamin.

Perhaps the most memorable feature of the day was the Australian fielding. Eleven times returned the ball straight to Healy from fully 90 yards and once made a superb stop at mid-off to save four. There is nothing ostentatious about the Australians in the field—unlike England, whose players are forever performing calisthenics. They simply get the job done.



Warne salutes the brilliant slip catch by his captain, Taylor, that sent back Samuels early in the second day's play. Photograph: Stuart Milligan

India's batting crumbles as Donald applies full throttle

BY OUR SPORTS STAFF

SOUTH AFRICA, drawing inspiration from superb fast bowling by Allan Donald, took complete control of the first Test against India at Kingsmead, Durban yesterday, finishing the second day 299 runs ahead with six second-innings wickets standing.

With Donald taking five for 40 and his pace colleagues—Pollock, Klusener and McMillan—offering no respite at the other end, India, who resumed at two without loss, were shot out for 100, which left them 135 behind on first innings.

Donald, who was forced to leave the recent series in India midway through the second Test in Calcutta due to a heel injury, proved virtually unplayable and has taken 22 wickets in the last six Test innings.

Donald's haul included the prized scalp of Tendulkar, the India captain, who was bowled for 15. "I've never been so happy taking a wicket," Donald said. "It was the quickest pitch I've seen at Kingsmead for a long time."

There were some doubts about Donald's dismissals of Srinath and Johnson, the former appearing to be caught off his arm-guard while the ball which dismissed Johnson, taken at short leg, appeared to loop off the batsman's shoulder.

By then, however, the India innings was damaged beyond repair. They were floundering at 72 for five at lunch, none of the top batsmen looking comfortable against pace bowlers who, cheered on by a crowd of 12,000, took full advantage of favourable conditions.

It was India's lowest score against South Africa, the previous lowest being the 137 made at Calcutta earlier this year. It was also their lowest score since 1987-88, when they were bundled out for 75 in Delhi by the West Indies fast bowlers.

The India new-ball pair,

Srinath and Prasad, also looked dangerous but failed to cause the same disruption as in the South Africa first innings, although Kirsten was dismissed by Prasad with only four runs on the board.

However, Hudson and Bacher consolidated South Africa's advantage with a second-wicket partnership which was worth 111 when Bacher (55) spooned a catch off Kumble.

Hudson looked a lot more confident than during his innings of 80 on the opening day. Hooking and pulling with great certainty, he reached his half-century, containing eight fours, from only 82 deliveries. Bacher, who was first to reach his fifty, struck one more boundary but faced 93 balls.

Prasad quickly accounted for Cullinan and when Hudson (52) was also caught off Kumble, South Africa had slipped to 120 for four. But Cronje, the captain, and Gibbs played out the day with little discomfort.

SOUTH AFRICA: First Innings 298 (A C Hudson 80; S K V Prasad 5 for 60).

Second Innings
A C Hudson c Tendulkar b Kumble 82
S K V Prasad c Donald b Prasad 58
A M Bacher c Tendulkar b Kumble 58
D C Gonsky c Klusener b Pollock 37
W J Cronje not out 17
H J Gibbs not out 26
Extras (b 5, lb 3, nb 3) 10
Total (4 wickets) 184
FALL OF WICKETS: 1-4, 2-115, 3-120, 4-128

BOWLING: Srinath 15-2-42-0; Prasad 15-2-40-1; Johnson 9-1-36-0; Kumble 10-3-19-2; Gonsky 2-0-0-0

INDIA: First Innings
V S Ramesh c Hudson b Donald 7
V V Ramani b Pollock 0
S C Ganguly c Klusener b Pollock 16
S A Tendulkar c Donald 18
M Azharuddin c Bacher b McMillan 16
R S Dhoni b Bacher 7
Y N Mungli c Richardson b Donald 4
A Kumble not out 18
A Burch c Cullinan b Donald 0
D Johnson c Bacher b Donald 3
S K V Prasad c Richardson b Klusener 3
Extras (b 4, lb 5, nb 7) 16
Total 100

FALL OF WICKETS: 1-2, 2-22, 3-36, 4-52, 5-88, 6-74, 7-74, 8-74, 9-86
BOWLING: Donald 16-4-40-5; Prasad 8-5-18-2; Klusener 7-1-44-1; McMillan 9-2-27-2
Umpires: S Byrne (New Zealand) and D Gorder (South Africa)

Holloioake sets fine example



Holloioake: outstanding

BEN HOLLOIOAKE, the Surrey all-rounder, was the only England player who shone against Pakistan in the third under-19 international in Lahore yesterday.

Having dismissed Pakistan for an unimpressive 237, the stage seemed set for England to build on the earlier successes of the three-match series, which they lead 1-0.

But, despite a promising start, the batsmen failed to dominate Abdul Razzaq, the seamer, or Imran Tahir, the

leg spinner, and were 167 for seven at the close.

It was left to Hollioake, who had bowled superbly to take six for 40, to show the specialist batsmen the way. He ended the day 44 not out, comfortably the highest score.

Holloioake began well, taking the vital scalp of Ahsan Saeed, the Pakistan captain, when he was on 77, and then mopping up the tail.

When England went in to bat, they lost Stephen Peters for nine and David Sales for 16

but still seemed comfortably placed at 105 for two. At that point, Gareth Barry was leg-before for 32 to Tahir, who then bowled Nash for a duck.

After Andrew Flintoff (30) and Chris Read (14) had departed, it was left to Hollioake and Zac Morris to try to set out the four remaining overs.

They almost made it, but Razzaq, swinging the ball considerably, bowled Morris for nought in the last over to leave England in deep water.

Pakistan may recall Salim

PAKISTAN are hoping to be able to call on Salim Malik to reinforce their team for the remainder of the World Series limited-overs tournament with Australia and West Indies.

Mohammad Zahid, the fast bowler, has a hand injury and Saeed Anwar, the opening batsman, is ill with a virus, leaving the Pakistanis with only 12 healthy players to choose from for the day-night match against Australia A at the Sydney Cricket Ground today. Their next World Series

game is against Australia on New Year's Day.

The Pakistan squad was already one short after Salim withdrew just before the departure for Australia after straining an ankle in a match against New Zealand. Wasim Akram, the Pakistan captain, said he expected to know today whether Salim would be fit to rejoin them.

Pakistan's batsmen have failed in their past two outings. They were dismissed for 67 in the second innings to lose

a four-day match against Tasmania and were bowled out for 123 on Thursday in a limited-overs defeat by Queensland.

Saeed tried unsuccessfully to resume training on Thursday and Wasim said a decision on whether he would return home would be made shortly. "His blood pressure is high and he's looking very, very weak," Wasim said. "The virus is making him weak from walking, running or even standing."



Salim: fitness test

Saviours of sanity in a mad world of sport

Welcome to the real Sporting Achievements Awards of 1996. The titles annually doled out by this, the column of columns, are, of course, the only ones that count. Congratulations to all the winners, and many thanks to all who wrote to me with suggestions for this space during the past 12 months.

Wicketkeeper of the year: shared by Lee Gernon, of New Zealand, and Andy Flower, of Zimbabwe; the first time both captains in a Test match have been 'keepers.

Rugby league player of the year: Craig Randall, of Salford, was ruled out of a match against Wigan after playing the previous four matches with a broken ankle. "At least the lads now know I wasn't faking an injury."

Renaissance goalkeeper of the year: a new addition to my prized collection of Albert Camus, Vladimir Nabokov, Yevgeny Yevtushenko, Julio Iglesias and the Pope. Step forward, Che Guevara: revolutionary, political icon and, best of all, goalkeeper.

Renaissance goalkeeper of the year (runner-up): 50 years ago, John Woodcock, sage of Longparish and former cricket correspondent of *The Times*, kept goal for Oxford against Cambridge at hockey. The final score was 3-3.

C. B. Fry award for versatility: Nancy Navalta. The sprinter, from the Philippines, took part in a men's event one weekend and a women's event the next.

Boxer of the year: Nino Benvenuti, a former world middleweight champion, who walked away from it all to care for lepers.

Simon Barnes



On Saturday

Statistic of the year: Australian males are shrinking. The average height is now 5ft 9½ in; seven years ago it was 5ft 9 in.

Possillanizim award: Australian cricket team, for refusing to play cricket in Colombo during the World Cup.

Possillanizim award (runner-up): England cricket authorities, who still have no plans to invite Sri Lanka, the world one-day champions, save for a single Test in 1998.

C. B. Fry versatility award (runner-up): Diego, who insisted on boxing three rounds with Santon Laciari, a former world flyweight champion.

Best entry in *Windsor* 1996: fried calamari stopped play.

Sporting revolution of the year: Elaine Canny, a woman, was appointed to the disciplinary panel of Australian No Rules Football. A proper appointment: "I can smell a token tart's job from a mile off."

Rhino-suited marathon-runner of the year: Mark Millington was the first home (in 4hr 50min) of the six runners who completed the London

Marathon in rhino suits in aid of the Save the Rhino International.

Facing facts award: a British crew at a French regatta: "The problem is that we were very slow compared with the other teams."

Praising Hitler award: as usual, this coveted prize goes to Marge Schott, owner of the Cincinnati Reds baseball team. "When he came in he was good... everyone knows he was good at the beginning, but he just went too far."

Jobsworth award: the customs officials who stopped Sergei Bubka, pole-vaulter and one of the greatest athletes in history, on his entry into Brazil. Suspicious of his equipment, they saved his pole in half.

Wicketkeeper of the year (runner-up): Wayne James, playing for Mashonaland against mighty Mashonaland, made 99 in the first innings, took nine catches in one innings, 13 in the match (a world record), and in the second innings managed to score 99 not out.

Fine of the year: Ian Russell, an Australian rugby league player, was fined Aus\$5,000 for drinking the wrong brand of beer.

Radical appointment of the year: the England Under-15 cricket team hired Julien Fountain, a baseball coach.

Fishy result of the year: Frankobaa O. Nayam Stars 22: Nayam thereby promoted on goal difference. Alas, the Ghana Football Association smelt a rat; both clubs were docked three points and Nayam stayed put.

Goalkeeper of the year: Jorge Campos, for playing two matches in a day: an international for Mexico, and then, half an hour later, a club match for Los Angeles Galaxy.

Promotion gimmick of the year: Palm Springs Suns, a minor league



Surgical operation of the year: Pele had his vasectomy reversed at the age of 55

baseball team, encouraged supporters to attend naked.

Naked archer of the year: Alison Williamson, British champion, who posed topless for *Esquire* magazine.

Administrator of the year: John Middleton, chief executive of the Grand National Archery Society, for his reaction to the *Esquire* incident: "It's even less than a storm in a teacup."

Author of the year: the anonymous manager of an Italian Serie B football club who won a competition for erotic short stories.

Fielder of the year: Paul Crabb, who, playing cricket in a match between Ilfracombe rugby club and Woolacombe, fetched a big hit back to the ground by bus.

Golfer of the year: Bill Billings, who scored his first hole in one at the age of 87. Being a sensible chap, he only took the game up when he retired.

Whingers of the year: the Australia cricket team, who refused to go to Sri Lanka for the World Cup because of their fears about security, finally went there in the autumn. Guess

what they complained about? Security. It was too tight.

Prophet of the year: Ali Bacher: "Test cricket is definitely a possibility in ten to 15 years." The country in question is Scotland. England quakes in its boots.

Nun of the year: Sister Pierangela, the footballing nun of Montione. Alas, she was removed by her order, and, distressed, returned home to the United States.

Violent event of the year: Great Britain Lionesses' rugby league tour of Australia.

Jobsworth of the year (runner-up): the Chelsea FC steward who turned away an improperly-dressed visitor by the name of Diego.

Rescue of the year: the players who prevented the referee, Luigi Fedele, from choking to death on his chewing gum in a match in Italy.

Rock group of the year: a French heavy metal band called Aston Villa.

Italian footballer of the year: Pierpaolo Curti, Serie C player who, like Gauguin, gave it all up to paint.

Italian footballer of the year (runner-up): Alessandro Veronesi, who, sent off by a female referee, responded by kissing her cheek.

Rescue of the year (runner-up): Tonya Harding, ice-skater and celebrated obstructor of the course of justice, who saved an elderly lady who collapsed in a bar by performing mouth-to-mouth resuscitation.

Reborn hope of the year: Once again, the British ski-jumping fraternity is seeking to establish a ski-jump in this country.

Greetings to every one, and remember: as long as British ski-jumping exists, hope springs eternal in the mad world of sport.

SHED A FEW POUNDS AFTER CHRISTMAS.

(SALE NOW ON.)

EXAMPLES OF REDUCTIONS	PRICE WAS	PRICE NOW
Pure wool suits	£495	£245
Pure wool suits (SAVILE ROW ONLY)	£950	£475
Pure wool jackets	£395	£195
Cotton business shirts (Buy 3 or more at £35 each)	£59	£39
Silk ties (Buy 3 or more at £20 each)	£49	£24.50
Church's suede brogues (SAVILE ROW ONLY)	£195	£125

(subject to availability)



GIEVES & HAWKES
No.1 Savile Row, London

LONDON: NO. 1 SAVILE ROW W1, 18 LIME ST EC3, SELF-DELIVERY ORDERED BY W1, 2 BATH, CHRISTIANIA, CHESTER, PORTSMOUTH, WINCHESTER, TOWNERS OF SOUHLOR.

IN BRIEF

Dawn of hope for Morning Glory

EXILE, the Hong Kong yacht that lost two hours after being forced to restart the Sydney to Hobart race, took the lead yesterday from *Morning Glory*, the 80ft German maxi, which was, however, expected to overtake the smaller yacht again overnight.

Exile, a 65-footer, was one nautical mile ahead of *Morning Glory* as the leaders entered the Bass Strait between the Australian mainland and Tasmania.

About 100 pilot whales and a number of large humpback whales joined the race leaders, forcing a number of yachts to take evasive action to prevent a collision.

Dublin date

American football: Ireland will host National Football League teams for the first time on July 27, when the Pittsburgh Steelers meet the Chicago Bears in the American Bowl in Dublin. The capital will become the ninth city to host an American Bowl, which was first held at Wembley Stadium in 1986.

Doherty's cue

Snooker: Ken Doherty, the champion, takes on John Parrott in the first match of the Dr Martens European League at the Diamond Centre, Irlingham, today. The other matches are Ronnie O'Sullivan against Steve Davis, and Peter Ebdon against Jimmy White.

Taylor's target

Darts: Phil Taylor will be hunting a fifth world title and a record prize of £45,000 when he begins his latest defence of the world championship at the Circus Tavern, Purfleet, Essex, today.

Oliver Holt on the man providing divine inspiration at Green Bay

White rules as minister for defense

People laughed at Reggie White when he announced his decision. They accused him of sacrificing the chance of Super Bowl glory for mammoth payoffs from Dallas Cowboys and San Francisco 49ers and choosing another team instead. White had a different story. He said God had told him to come to Green Bay.

Once, perhaps 20 or 30 years ago, his claim might have provoked less cynicism. There seemed to be a stronger link then between God and religion, a certain nobility in the strivings of the nation's young men, the kind of qualities that led to Roger Staubach, the Cowboys quarterback for much of the Seventies, being nicknamed God's quarterback.

But the National Football League (NFL) these days is a godless place, a place where drug busts and sex scandals are regular news, where image and trash-talking have become equally, if not more important, than talent, where commercialism and the rush for endorsements is all-powerful.

The problems may be no worse than in other sports but White's pronouncements still appeared outlandish in comparison, especially as terms of his four-year, \$17 million contract in 1993 were there for all to see and the Packers were hardly in a position to challenge for the Super Bowl.

White's religious beliefs — he is an ordained minister — were made all the harder for some to accept because he has become one of the most famous players in the modern game by excelling in the art of sacking the quarterback — thudding in to him as he tries to pass the ball and crumpling him to the floor. No one has more sacks than him. Not Lawrence Taylor, once of New York Giants, not anyone.

His habit, for instance, of hurling players to the floor in pursuit of the quarterback and then going back to help them up with the assurance "Jesus loves you" has raised a few eyebrows, particularly when

one considers that he made his name with the fearsome Philadelphia Eagles "body bag" defense in the early Nineties. Eleven times in succession now, his fellow professionals have elected him to represent his position of defensive end in the Pro-Bowl, a kind of NFL Select team.

But White, 35, is unbowed. His decision to move to Green Bay, a small community on the shores of Lake Michigan, a town where there is no African-American population, has already been vindicated by the generosity shown towards him when his church in his native Tennessee was burnt down by arsonists. It will cost more than \$1 million to rebuild and more than \$200,000 has already been donated by residents of Wisconsin.

Two weeks ago, the Packers

The Detroit Lions have dismissed Wayne Fontes, their coach, after eight seasons, making him the sixth NFL head coach to lose his job since the end of the season. Fontes, who had one year left of his contract, took the Lions to just one win in five games in the NFL play-offs, which led to his downfall.

awarded him a new five-year deal worth \$19 million, to give him in Green Bay until the end of his career. The Packers need not take part in the first round of play-off matches this weekend because their record is so good they have earned a bye as well as home-field advantage.

Two days before the Packers' crushing defeat of Minnesota Vikings on Sunday — a match White ended by holding a prayer meeting on the turf at Lambeau Field with players from both sides — he sat in one of the small rooms in the Green Bay front office, watching the snow falling thickly on the parking lot and speaking of the reasons why God brought him there.

"The people here have responded to the preaching of the gospel," White said. "They have responded to the way I feel about Christ and they are

not offended by The Word. If I had gone to Frisco or Dallas, maybe people would have been, but not here. Some of the things I'm trying to do to create opportunities for people, they have responded to that also. This is a much different place to what I imagined."

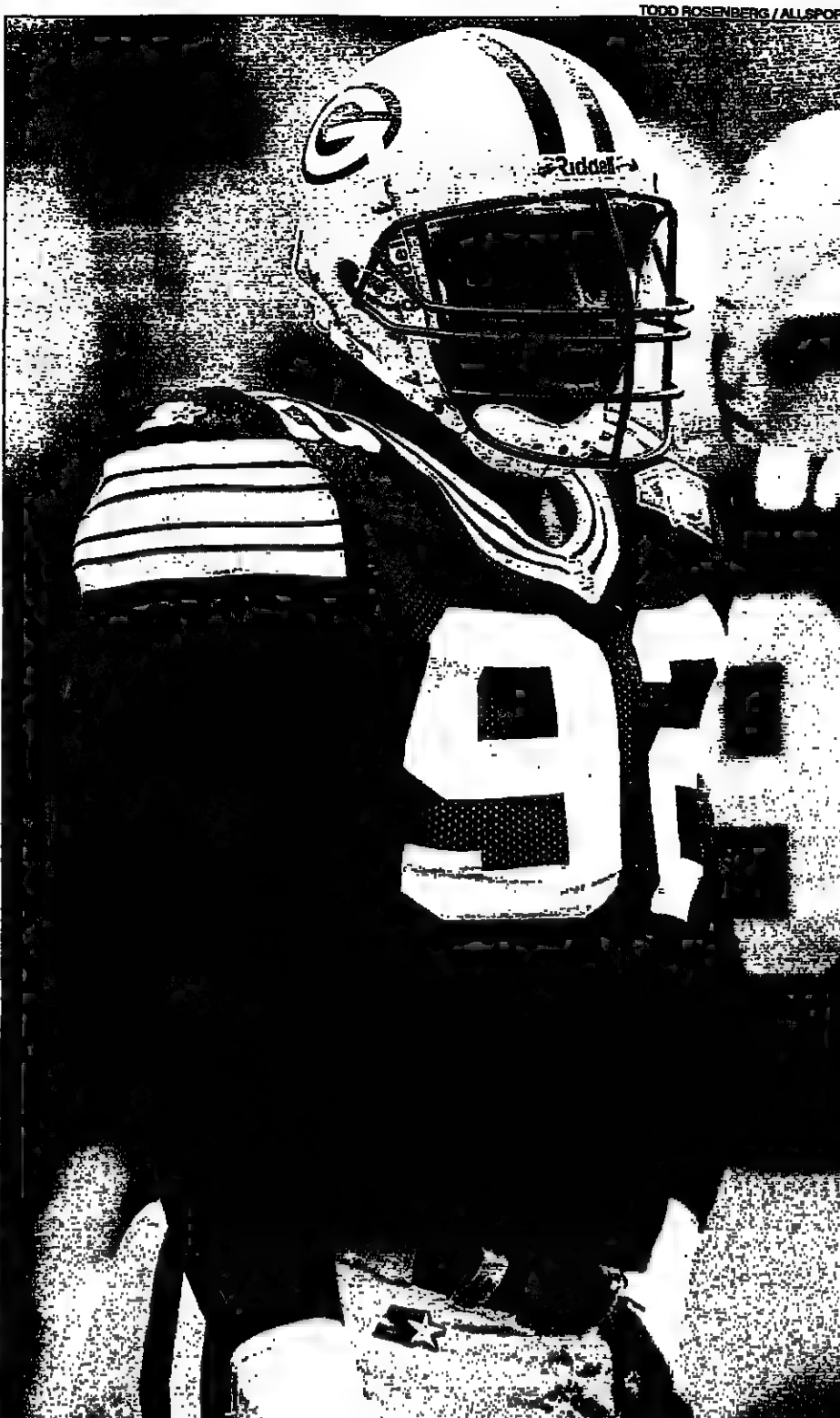
There are still those, of course, who find it difficult to reconcile his wild-eyed pursuit of the quarterback — in what is basically an attempt to disable, temporarily, an opponent — with his preaching and his efforts to set an example for others. "Football is not violent," he insisted. "It is when people kill each other and all the wars we have going on, that is violent. Why we do it is not violent, it is aggressive. We do not go out with the intention of killing each other. It is a game which happens to have a lot of contact. But it is a controlled contact."

"I have no problem with it because the way I conduct myself on the field reflects something of what I am off it. When I preach, when I talk to somebody about the Lord, I am very serious about it. All the things I do in a physical way on the field, off the field, I may do them in a spiritual way or a mental way."

This year, the Packers are likely to give White his best shot so far at winning the Super Bowl, a goal that has almost taken on the air of a crusade for him and his fans. It may be his last chance, too. He has been in the league for 12 seasons now and probably only has two more left in him, while the Packers, who lost only three of their 16 games this year, may be approaching their peak.

"As a football player," he said, "I would feel fulfilled if I had to retire without winning a Super Bowl. But as a person, no, I realise that even if I did win a championship, if my life is not lived in such a way that I am affecting other people's lives, then that Super Bowl ring will never mean a thing."

NFL WILD-CARD GAMES: NFC: Dallas v Minnesota; San Francisco v Philadelphia. AFC: Jacksonville v Jacksonville, Pittsburgh v Indianapolis.



White shows his opponents no mercy and leads the league in quarterback sacks

SAILING

Golding in sight of second success

BY EDWARD GORMAN
SAILING CORRESPONDENT

MIKE GOLDING on *Group 4* was on course yesterday for back-to-back wins in the first two legs of the BT Globe Challenge as he raced towards Wellington, in New Zealand, with the highest average speed in the fleet and only 300 miles to sail.

Golding's crew were in good spirits to be finally sailing under blue skies and a steady breeze which allowed an unchanged full sail plan for 24 hours. "This was Sam's first to us and our little bit of relaxation — no sail changes for a whole day," the crew reported.

Golding, who won the first leg to Rio de Janeiro by just two hours from Simon Walker on *Toshiba Wave Warrior*, was almost 60 miles ahead of his nearest pursuer, Andy Hindley, on *Save The Children*, yesterday. He will need to sail into a big hole to be chased that close to the line this time.

Farther back, however, several yachts battling it out for fourth and fifth

BT Challenge chart — 38

places have found themselves becalmed — a cruel fate for their crews, after having survived all that the Southern Ocean has thrown at them over the past month.

The victims are Richard Tudor, on *Nuclear Electric*, Tom O'Connor, on *Pause To Remember*, and Mervyn Owen, on *Global Teamwork*. The beneficiary is Richard Merriweather on *Commercial Union*, who has steered a more southerly course than his three nearest rivals and picked up more breeze.

Yesterday, *Commercial Union* covered 20 miles in six hours, which was enough to overtake both *Nuclear Electric* and *Pause To Remember*, moving her into sixth place. The next boat in her sights was *Global Teamwork*, the most northerly of the fleet.

On *Teamwork*, the frustration was clear enough. Owen reported: "The last [position] poll has seen us lose over 40 miles to the fleet in 24 hours. The lead boats are now in a northerly westerly and are pulling away at nine knots. Unless something happens very soon, we're going to find ourselves at the back of the middle pack, instead of very much at the front. After being in the top three for most of this leg, this is almost too much to bear."

ATHLETICS: EUROPEAN CHAMPION SEEKS TO COMPLETE HAT-TRICK OF IMPORTANT CROSS-COUNTRY VICTORIES AT DURHAM

In-form Brown can put icing on British cake

BY DAVID POWELL
ATHLETICS CORRESPONDENT

TWO weeks after becoming the first British man for 21 years to win a senior international cross-country title, Jon Brown today attempts to complete a hat-trick of wins that would provide a fitting conclusion to 1996, the year of the British distance-running revival.

Already this month, Brown, 25, has defeated Paul Tergat, the world champion, in a cross-country race in Spain, following that up with a victory in the European championships in Charleroi, Belgium, where he denied Paulo Guerra, of Portugal, a third successive title. On neither occasion was he operating at full

throttle. In the Bupa County Durham cross-country today, Brown may need to press the pedal to the floor.

He faces Daniel Komen, the Kenyan who shattered Noureddine Morceli's 3,000 metres world record by 4.44sec in September and whose staying power is evident from his 5,000 metres in Zurich in August, where he ran 12:45.09, and his 5,000/10,000 metres double win at the junior world championships of 1994. Last night Brown acknowledged: "This will be my toughest race so far."

Brown played the first ace in Britain's hand this year when, at the world cross-country championships in March, he finished as the highest-placed European. Liz McColgan's

victory in the Flora London Marathon, and those of Paul Evans and Marian Sutton in the Chicago Marathon, strengthened the British hand in world distance-running. Now Brown is on a winning run and he is seeking to become the first Briton to win the Durham race since Eamonn Martin in 1990.

But few develop a cold the day before the 10,000 metres final in Atlanta. Brown would no doubt have finished top European there too, but narrowly conceded rank to Stephanie Franke, from Germany.

If he can give Komen a close race, it should underline his belief that a top-six place in the world championships — in cross-country and on the track — is within his scope in 1997. Brown

was born in Bridgend, educated in Sheffield and Iowa, and recently moved from Duisburg to Vancouver. His wife, Martina, is German and Brown arrived from Düsseldorf last night after spending Christmas at his in-laws'. Komen was in Durham 24 hours ahead of Brown, his early arrival from Kenya proof of his just for an easy pay-day.

This may not be a two-man race. Assefa Mezgebu, last year's winner, from Ethiopia, returns and there is a profusion of Britons who will be seeking to make a name in front of the BBC cameras. They include Neil Caddy, controversially omitted from the European championship team, and Keith Culley, a potential medal

winner in Charleroi who caught flu a week before the race and Rob Whalley, who was eighth in the World Cross-Country Challenge in Brussels last weekend.

Durham marks the return of Paula Radcliffe, who defends her title not having raced since October. The organisers have not been gentle on her, lining up Cate Warr, the world champion, as opposition. Hayley Haining, who finished ahead of Radcliffe in the 1991 junior world championships before prolonged injury intervened, will be defending her position as this winter's British No. 1. Radcliffe, who broke Zola Budd's 5,000 metres British record last summer, is working her way back from a knee injury.

COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO THE WEEKEND'S FIXTURES

FOOTBALL

Kick-off 3.00 unless stated
Denotes all-England match
Pools coupon numbers in brackets
P denotes pitch reported

FA Carling Premiership

(1) Arsenal v Aston Villa
(2) Chelsea v Sheffield Wed
(3) Coventry v Middlesbrough
(4) Derby v Blackburn
(5) Everton v Wimbledon
(6) Leicester v Nottingham Forest
(7) Manchester Utd v Leeds
(8) Newcastle v Tottenham
(9) West Ham v Sunderland

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Second Division

(1) Bradford v Chesterfield
(2) Bristol Rovers v Millwall
(3) Burnley v Gillingham
(4) Crewe v Bournemouth
(5) Luton v Wycombe
(6) Notts County v Plymouth
(7) Peterborough v Wrexham
(8) Preston v Blackpool
(9) Rotherham v Bury
(10) Shrewsbury v York
(11) Stockport v Watford
(12) Walsley v Blackpool

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(3) Charlton v Walsley
(4) Crystal Palace v Stoke
(5) Huddersfield v Ipswich
(6) Luton v Walsley
(7) Oxford Utd v Reading
(8) Port Vale v Portsmouth
(9) Shrewsbury v Colchester
(10) Swindon v Gillingham
(11) Torquay v Cambridge Utd

Football League

(1) Barnsley v Manchester City
(2) Bolton v Southampton
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(4) Crystal Palace v Stoke
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Football League

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(11) Torquay v Cambridge Utd

THE TIMES GUIDE TO THE PREMIERSHIP THIS WEEKEND

ARSENAL

A tense Friday for Arsenal as they waited to see if Ian Wright would be let off the disciplinary hook again. How vital his goals are to the Gunners and how recklessly he gets himself into trouble? The return to the midfield by Patrick Vieira will give it greater bite. Villa's recent form, destroyers of Wimbledon, limp victims of Chelsea, gives Arsenal the psychological edge. But they still badly lack creative flair in midfield. Maybe they should look at Villa's Curcio, only a substitute just now. BG

DERBY COUNTY

Aljosa Asanovic will play against Blackburn Rovers this afternoon after being given a "tactical rest" on Boxing Day. "European players are not used to the demands we make over Christmas and the new year," Jim Smith, the manager, said. However, Derby will need more than the wiles of the inspirational creative influence of the Croatia international as they attempt to recover from three successive defeats and Smith has promised "a lot of scrapping" in the weeks ahead. RH

ASTON VILLA

Mark Bosnich was not a happy bunny after the 2-0 defeat against Chelsea on Boxing Day. Villa's colourful custodian having conceded his side's first goals in five matches. He was more than a trifle at fault, too, yet preferred to channel his ire in the direction of football's crazy festive programme. "Why do we run our players into the ground for the sake of entertainment?" Bosnich griped. "They don't run racehorses four times in a week, do they?" Poor little soldier. RK

BLACKBURN ROVERS

Tony Parkes has done a remarkable job in transforming Rovers. Now he is preparing for the biggest test yet. The caretaker manager has lifted his temporary charges off the bottom, and now there is faint hope of a place in Europe, rather than the once very real fear of relegation. But Rovers have still to win away in the Premiership this season, and Parkes wants to see that depressing run dealt with this afternoon. He has a worry over Colin Hendry, with a leg injury. DM

CHELSEA

It seems sure that Ruud Geulit, the manager, himself playing so powerfully in central defence, will keep the impressive striking partnership of Mark Hughes and Gianfranco Zola that has served Chelsea so well in the last two games. It will be interesting to compare Zola with another tiny, gifted but less consistent Italian, Benito Carbone, of Wednesday. The return of Eddie Newton has strengthened Chelsea's midfield. Vialli, Leboeuf and Wise must wait their time on the bench. BG

COVENTRY CITY

Gordon Strachan, a manager of only seven weeks, is now bursting with confidence after Coventry's three successive wins. His purchase of Darren Huckerby, from Newcastle, is also proving a big hit at Highfield Road, so much so that Strachan has offered a few words of wisdom to his senior Premiership colleagues. "We had Darren down for a week's trial first, so we could have a look and assess him properly," Strachan said. "Perhaps all managers should do that." RK

EVERTON

Everton have been hit by an injury crisis, with Dave Watson, Craig Short and Andy Hinchcliffe all out of the defence. Tony Grant and Joe Parkinson struggling to be fit in midfield, and Andrei Kanchelskis still battling against influenza. No sign of them copying Middlesbrough and calling the game off, though. Instead, youth team players Richard Dunne and John Hills stand by to make their debuts, along with Graham Allen, who appeared briefly on Boxing Day. PB

LEEDS UNITED

As if Leeds losing the (apparently) easiest of their four holiday matches, against Coventry, was not bad enough, Tony Yeboah is continuing to make waves for George Graham, the manager. Yeboah came on for the last 18 minutes against Coventry. "It was good to get some action," he complained yesterday, "but I need to start games so I can improve my fitness and confidence." Graham is more concerned about his defence at Old Trafford today and at Newcastle on January 1. PB

LEICESTER CITY

Frank Clark had resigned just a few hours earlier when Martin O'Neill pre-empted questions by ruling himself out of contention for what was then the vacant managerial job at Nottingham Forest. The mystery is why anybody should have considered that O'Neill would leave Leicester, where he is winning fresh acclaim with each week. The sides meet at Filbert Street this afternoon and it is a measure of their relative progress that Leicester's supporters expect a victory. RH

LIVERPOOL

It is said that Liverpool can not function without Steve McManaman, but against Leicester City, the absence of Robbie Fowler looked significant. "We missed him because Stan Collymore is not as good at leading the line," Roy Evans, the manager, said after the disappointing draw. Hence the urgency in getting Fowler fit from an ankle injury he suffered against Wimbledon. The forward trained yesterday morning, and if there is no reaction today, then he should play tomorrow. DM

MANCHESTER UNITED

With nine goals and Andy Cole back, it has been a brilliant Christmas so far for Alex Ferguson, the manager, and with two home games remaining over the holidays, United's charge is beginning to look ominous. "The players are looking good and fresh," Ferguson said. "We've had to change the team all season, so there's nobody, apart from Beckham and Cantona, who has played a lot of games. And having someone like Andy Cole returning after his injuries and illness is a major boost." PB

MIDDLESBROUGH

An annus horribilis could end on an improved note at Coventry today. A win would certainly endorse the assertion of Bryan Robson, the manager, that the Boxing Day victory against Everton indicated his troubled side had finally "turned a corner". Mere survival may not be enough to persuade Ravanelli to stay for long but Robson declared: "A lot of people said this club couldn't attract top players. We have and now people are trying to make it fall down." LT

NEWCASTLE UNITED

Some home-spun philosophy from Terry McDermott, the assistant manager, about the current troubles. "We can't quite put our finger on why we are getting beat, but it probably has something to do with the fact that three, four or even five of our players are not playing up to the standard we know they are capable of." Could be on to something there, Terry. Relief could be provided by David Ginola, who is in line for a return following a calf injury. DM

NOTTINGHAM FOREST

In a dismal season, the development of Alf-Inge Haaland has offered a morsel of cheer. Now Forest are facing up to the possibility of losing the combative midfielder player, a Norway international. His contract expires at the end of the season, and Leeds United have already shown interest. With Manchester United also believed to be monitoring the situation, Haaland said, somewhat ominously: "I want to stay, but the conditions of the contract have to be right for me." RH

SHEFFIELD WEDNESDAY

It has been a frustrating route back, but Regi Blinker should return to the starting line-up against Chelsea for the first time since his suspension by FIFA for signing contracts with two different clubs. "It is annoying enough to lose your place, but to lose it because of paperwork is very difficult to accept," he said. "But I am back in contention, and I just want to play and forget about the incident." Mind you, he may find it hard for a few weeks after a £30,000 fine. DM

SUNDERLAND

Rumours that Peter Reid, the manager, might be tempted to transfer his talents to Nottingham Forest were laughed off by the man himself. "I'm happy where I am," he said yesterday. And so Reid should be. He is one of the five best-paid managers in the Premiership. Sunderland, away at West Ham today, are without Kevin Ball, who has a broken jaw; Gareth Hall and Martin Scott are also injured. Reid admitted: "We are going to be stretched at the back for the next three weeks." LT

HOW THEY STAND

	P	Pts	Goal diff	Last five
1 Liverpool	20	39	+18	LWWD
2 Arsenal	19	36	+17	WWDD
3 Manchester Utd.	19	34	+16	WDWW
4 Wimbledon	18	34	+8	DWWW
5 Aston Villa	18	33	+10	WWWW
6 Newcastle	19	31	+7	LDLD
7 Chelsea	19	31	+3	LDWL
8 Everton	19	28	+4	LWDL
9 Tottenham	19	28	+2	EWDL
10 Sheffield Wed.	19	27	-1	DWDD
11 Sunderland	19	23	-7	WLWL
12 Derby	19	22	-5	LDWL
13 Leicester	19	22	-7	LDWL
14 Leeds	19	22	-7	WDDL
15 Coventry	19	19	-8	LWWW
16 West Ham	19	18	-9	LDLD
17 Middlesbrough	19	18	-10	LDLW
18 Blackburn	19	16	-8	DWLW
19 Southampton	19	16	-8	LWLW
20 Nottm Forest	19	13	-18	LDWL

WEST HAM UNITED

With the team blowing so cold, the only bubble at Upton Park these days is the one covering the pitch. Filled with hot air, it should ensure that the match against Sunderland today goes ahead. But do not expect a classic as Harry Redknapp, the manager, asks his players to exchange flair for fortitude. "We need a couple of niks," Redknapp, who knows that defeat could send his team into the bottom three, said yesterday. "We have got to get back to being hard to beat." Were they ever? KP

WIMBLEDON

The decision of Graham Poll, the referee, to postpone the Boxing Day game with West Ham United was frustrating but inevitable, according to Joe Kinnear, the manager. The goalmouth in the shadow of the new Holmesdale Road stand was "like concrete, and dangerous", he said, "but it may be a blessing. We may be going up to Everton a little fresher than them." The injured ankle of Chris Perry would have ruled him out on Thursday, but he has "an outside chance" of playing today. NS

Reports: Brian Glanville, Peter Ball, Russell Kempson, Richard Hobson, Louise Taylor, Nick Szczepanski, Keith Pike, David Maddock. Statistics: Julian Desborough

ARSENAL v ASTON VILLA

TICKETS: Sold out

10-YEAR RECORD: 2-1, --, 2-3, 0-1, 5-0, 0-0, 1-2, 0-0, 2-0.

HOW THEY LINE UP

ARSENAL (from): J. Lukic, L. Dixon, A. Linighan, A. Adams, P. Vieira, M. Keown, S. Bouad, N. Winterburn, R. Parfitt, P. Merson, D. Bergkamp, I. Wright, M. Pires, R. Garcia, S. Morris, J. Harrison, V. Baranov, P. Shaw.

ASTON VILLA (from): M. Bosnich, F. Nelson, A. Wright, U. Ekeogu, S. Staunton, P. Serrano, A. Townsend, M. Draper, I. Taylor, S. Miesowicz, D. Yorke, S. Curcio, J. Joachim, T. Johnson, C. Tier, L. Hendrie, G. Farrelly, M. Oakes.

CHELSEA v SHEFFIELD WEDNESDAY

TICKETS: Seats available

10-YEAR RECORD: 2-0, 2-1, --, 4-0, --, 0-3, 0-2, 1-1, 1-0, 0-0

HOW THEY LINE UP

CHELSEA (from): F. Grodas, D. Petrescu, R. Gullit, F. Leboeuf, S. Clarke, A. Myers, G. Vialli, M. Hughes, D. Wise, M. Duberry, C. Burley, R. de Matos, S. Minis, F. Sencel, G. Zola, E. Newton.

SHEFFIELD WEDNESDAY (from): K. Pressman, P. Atherton, D. Stefanovic, J. Newcome, S. Oakes, D. Walker, I. Nelson, S. Nicol, G. Whittingham, G. Hyde, M. Pemberton, R. Blinker, R. Humphreys, A. Booth, D. Hirst, L. Briscoe, M. Williams, W. Collins, B. Linighan, O. Trustill, B. Carbone.

COVENTRY CITY v MIDDLESBROUGH

TICKETS: Seats available

10-YEAR RECORD: --, 3-4, --, --, 2-1, --, 0-0.

HOW THEY LINE UP

COVENTRY CITY (from): S. Ogilvie, R. Shaw, L. Daley, D. Dublin, P. Williams, P. Tetter, K. Richardson, G. McAllister, J. Salako, N. Whelan, D. Huckerby, E. Jess, B. Borrows, P. Genaux, W. Boland, J. Flan.

MIDDLESBROUGH (from): G. Walsh, N. Cox, C. Morris, S. Vickers, Emerson, M. Beck, Juninho, F. Ravanelli, C. Blackmore, C. Hignett, G. Liddle, J. A. Ford, C. Frazer, M. Summers.

DERBY COUNTY v BLACKBURN ROVERS

TICKETS: Sold out

10-YEAR RECORD: 3-2, --, --, 0-2, --, --, 0-2.

HOW THEY LINE UP

DERBY COUNTY (from): R. Hault, M. Taylor, J. Laursen, L. Carsley, G. Rowett, D. Yates, P. McGrath, I. Simeas, C. Powell, D. Powell, S. Flynn, A. Asanovic, P. Trolopp, C. Dally, D. Sturridge, A. Ward, M. Gabbadini.

BLACKBURN ROVERS (from): T. Flowers, J. Kenna, H. Berg, C. Hendry, G. La Sauc, T. Shenwood, L. Bohinen, W. McKinley, J. Wilcock, N. Gudmundsson, G. Doris, S. Given, G. Fenton, M. Marier, G. Croft, M. Brookes, D. Duff.

EVERTON v WIMBLEDON

TICKETS: Seats available

10-YEAR RECORD: 3-0, 2-2, 1-1, 1-1, 1-2, 2-0, 0-0, 3-0, 0-0, 2-4.

HOW THEY LINE UP

EVERTON (from): N. Southall, P. Gerrard, E. Barnett, D. Unsworth, A. Kanchelskis, N. Barry, J. Ebbrell, A. Grant, J. Parkinson, D. Ferguson, G. Speed, G. Stuart, M. Branch, P. Rideout, M. Jackson, P. Hockley.

WIMBLEDON (from): N. Sullivan, C. Cunningham, A. Kinnear, V. Jones, D. Blackwell, O. Leonardson, R. Earle, E. Ekeogu, D. Holdsworth, M. Gayle, C. Perry, J. Goodman, A. Rowles, A. Thom, B. McAllister, N. Ardley, S. Castledine, M. Harford, A. Clarke, J. Ewell, P. Fear, P. Head.

LEICESTER CITY v NOTTINGHAM FOREST

TICKETS: Sold out

10-YEAR RECORD: 3-1, --, --, --, 1-0, 2-4.

HOW THEY LINE UP

LEICESTER CITY (from): K. Kellar, S. Grayson, J. Watts, S. Prior, C. Hill, P. Rothery, S. Campbell, M. Izzi, M. Roberts, S. Ciarrochi, E. Heskey, N. Lennon, N. Lewis, G. Parker, S. Taylor, J. Lawrence, K. Poole.

NOTTINGHAM FOREST (from): M. Crossley, S. Pearce, C. Cooper, S. Chettle, D. Saunders, K. Campbell, I. Woon, N. Jeran, C. Allen, A. Hauland, N. Clough, S. Gemmell, J. Lee, B. Roy, D. Lytle, S. Batherwick, A. Fettes.

MANCHESTER UNITED v LEEDS UNITED

TICKETS: Sold out

10-YEAR RECORD: --, 1-1, 1-1, 2-0, 0-0, 0-0, 1-0.

HOW THEY LINE UP

MANCHESTER UNITED (from): P. Schmeichel, G. Neville, D. May, R. Johnson, D. Irwin, D. Beckham, N. Butt, E. Cantona, R. Giggs, P. Scholes, O. G. Solskjaer, P. Neville, A. Cole, K. Poborsky, B. McClair, P. Thornley, R. van der Gouw, R. Keane.

LEEDS UNITED (from): N. Marlyn, C. Palmer, D. Wetherell, P. Barmsey, Emerson, M. Beck, Juninho, F. Ravanelli, C. Blackmore, C. Hignett, I. Rush, B. Deane, A. Yeboah, R. Wallace, R. Harte, M. Ford, M. Barmsey.

NEWCASTLE UNITED v TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR

TICKETS: Sold out

10-YEAR RECORD: 1-1, 2-0, 2-2, --, 0-1, 3-3, 1-1.

HOW THEY LINE UP

NEWCASTLE UNITED (from): P. Strick, W. Barton, J. Beresford, D. Batty, D. Pascoe, R. Lee, P. Beardsley, A. Shearer, L. Ferdinand, F. Asprilla, R. Elliott, D. Givens, S. Hyslop, K. Gillespie, S. Watson, L. Clark, P. Albert, P. Kinnear.

TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR (from): I. Walker, E. Beardsley, S. Carr, D. Austin, C. Calderwood, J. Scalls, S. Campbell, C. Wilson, D. Howells, S. Nethercott, J. Edinborough, A. Sinton, A. Nielsen, R. Fox, S. Iversen, E. Sutherland, J. Dooz.

LEADING SCORERS

14: I. Wright (Arsenal)
11: R. Fowler (Liverpool), A. Shearer (Newcastle United)
10: D. Yorke (Aston Villa)
9: O. G. Solskjaer (Manchester United), F. Ravanelli (Middlesbrough)
8: M. Tassier (Southampton)
6: G. Vialli (Chelsea), E. Ekeogu (Wimbledon)
7: L. Ferdinand (Newcastle United), R. Earle (Wimbledon)

CHAMPIONSHIP SETTING

7-6: Liverpool, 9-4: Manchester United, 7-2: Arsenal, 6-1: Newcastle United, 19-1: Aston Villa, 20-1: Chelsea, 40-1: Everton, Wimbledon, 100-1: Tottenham Hotspur

WEST HAM UNITED v SUNDERLAND

TICKETS: Seats available

10-YEAR RECORD: --, 5-0, --, --, 6-0, --, --.

HOW THEY LINE UP

WEST HAM UNITED (from): L. Nikolic, M. Bowen, M. Reper, S. Balc, J. Dicks, K. Rowland, J. Moncur, I. Bishop, M. Hughes, M. Newell, H. Porfiro, D. Williamson, R. Lampard, F. Raducioiu, S. Potts, L. Sealey.

SUNDERLAND (from): L. Perez, G. Hall, D. Kubicki, M. Gray, A. McVie, R. Ord, D. Kelly, A. Rae, P. Braconwell, S. Agnew, M. Smith, C. Russell, P. Stewart, D. Preece, S. Aiston, P. Hockingbottom, D. Williams, D. Holloway.

SOUTHAMPTON v LIVERPOOL

TICKETS: Sold out

10-YEAR RECORD: 2-1, 2-2, 1-3, 4-1, 1-0, 1-1, 2-1, 4-2, 0-2, 1-3.

HOW THEY LINE UP

SOUTHAMPTON (from): D. Baessant, C. Lundevam, U. van Gool, A. Nelson, E. Berthoin, R. Slater, M. Oakley, M. Le Tissier, J. Magilton, E. Ostenstad, G. Watson, M. Robinson, S. Basham, D. Hughes, K. Monkou.

LIVERPOOL (from): D. James, D. Matteo, S. Barmsey, J. McAllister, M. Wright, N. Ruddock, P. Babo, J. Barnes, S. McManaman, M. Thomas, S. Collymore, R. Fowler, A. Warner, P. Banger.

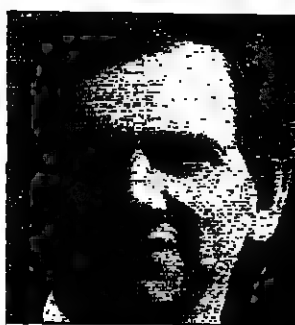
WHEN TO WATCH ON TELEVISION

Today
10.50pm BBC 1 Match of the Day (Highlights)
Tomorrow
11am Sky Sports 2 Goals on Sunday
3pm Sky Sports 1 Ford Escort Super Sunday
Sunderland v Liverpool (live)
The official internet site of the FA Carling Premiership
is at <http://www.facarling.com/>

FOOTBALL

Middlesbrough's sick excuse stirs festive headache

ROB HUGHES



Weekend View

THANKS to Middlesbrough Football Club, the old year ends, and the new one begins, with a most serious hangover, a challenge to the fundamental principle that the game is played for the supporters.

Already, the ramifications of Middlesbrough's refusal to play their FA Carling Premiership fixture at Blackburn Rovers a week ago can be felt at both ends of the table. Blackburn and Middlesbrough, fresher than their opponents, had vital wins in their next fixtures on Boxing Day.

Blackburn beat Newcastle United, who already had the handicap imposed, of having played Liverpool in the north-east on Monday night. And Middlesbrough, fielding closer to a full team than Everton, produced their first league win in 13 games stretching back to September 14.

So, on the face of it, the clubs involved in the no-show stole a march on other teams in the midst of the congested fixtures programme. That is bad enough; it cannot be proved that the results would have been different had the fixture list not been re-negotiated. But, long before the FA Premier League inquiry into Middlesbrough's claim that 23 hours before kick-off at Ewood Park, they had 23 professionalists unfit through illness and injury, damage has been done.

First and foremost, the losers are spectators. Imagine those who, in these days of high-priced seating, had looked at the schedule in advance, had planned their business, their budget, or their family life so that they could watch the Brazilians of Middlesbrough, who could well be passing through England for just one season.

Even with so much television, 1996 showed us the communion between supporters and players that has always been the essence of the sport. Did not Germany take out an advertisement at the end of Euro 96 to thank the people for "bringing home" this very principle?

And what, during the 12 months, was more significant than the fact that more than one million people, lovers of the game or just those attracted by the hype, passed through the nine stadiums used for that tournament, and no one was hurt by the experience?

Second to the supporters is the integrity of the competition. Doubtless, Middles-

brough are working on doctors' notes for all 23 of their players caught in the sudden epidemic. Doubtless, Middlesbrough, blaming others for the way Emerson, with his truancy, has messed them about, feel isolated and beleaguered as a club.

However, when it came to Thursday, all the Middlesbrough big guns — Emerson, Juninho, Ravanelli, and Beck — were fit and well to overrun

'They should make them play Blackburn without any of the 23 ailing men'

Everton. I leave it there, for it is the Premier League inquiry that must determine the facts. But already the playing field has been tilted this Christmas. I doubt it was coincidence that Newcastle lost at Blackburn and that Liverpool could not beat Leicester City at Anfield, three days after their exhausting encounter at St James' Park.

I watched Aston Villa, again in a match rescheduled for television, dismantle Wimbledon 5-0 on Sunday. Then a Villa team that looked decidedly stale claret succumbed



Emerson: played truant

2-0 at home to a refreshed Chelsea on Thursday.

So, where in the past it was only weather that could tamper with the evenness of the demands on footballing fixtures, there are now other factors that can achieve this. It is business more than sport, and perhaps if the British public wants to see so many exotic overseas talents, it must be accepted that the paymasters are now television, sponsors, and commercial concerns. But we betide anyone who believes that spectators are expendable.

What is to be done? Blackburn have already called for Middlesbrough to be made to forfeit the three points. Would that be deterrent enough, though? Would it even be fair to others — be they in the relegation zone, or even the quest for a place in Europe, which is not beyond the dreams of Middlesbrough and Blackburn Rovers?

One imagines an easy option would be to fine Middlesbrough, say, £150,000 and reschedule the match. If the advantage already gained is the turning point of Middlesbrough's fortunes, it would be cheap at the price. My son, cursed, perhaps, by the bug of club loyalty, considers that the Premier League should call Middlesbrough's bluff and make them play Blackburn without any of the 23 ailing men.

The punishment has no precedent in the five years of the Premier League. A club crying off from a fixture in this way was not foreseen, although in the Football League, the articles clearly state that failure to fulfil a fixture "without just cause" would be deemed guilty of misconduct.

Taking care, in such times when a club from the Premier League might challenge through the courts for restraint of trade were they, for example, to be demoted, I suggest that January 14 (the date of the inquiry) is a pivotal date for the whole structure.

In olden times, when Alan Hardaker, the League secretary, regarded himself as a supreme and had no tolerance with club excuses, authority would have been draconian. Now, because the future depends on it, the 20 chairmen of the Premiership must decide among themselves what punishment, and what safeguard for their future business, can be determined. They start from scratch, and they face a perilous precedent.

Derby's lost gem showing true worth

DEAN STURRIDGE

THE FACE OF FOOTBALL



By Richard Hobson

There is an old children's story about the theft of a diamond necklace in which a band of street urchins discover the stolen item draped around a waxwork in the display of royalty at Madame Tussauds. It was on public view all along, but went unnoticed alongside the fake riches.

The moral is that sometimes the answer is staring you in the face, and cannot be lost on followers of Derby County. The general impression nationwide is that Dean Sturridge, the jewel in their crown, has enjoyed a meteoric rise. In fact, at 23, he believes that only Martin Taylor, the goalkeeper, is a longer-serving player among the present squad.

While others failed, Sturridge waited in the store-room for a chance to be put on show. Now, he is a prime exhibit. Sturridge, however, is not simply a reason for Derby's re-emergence after what he describes as "wasted years". He is symbolic of it.

A million-pound signing was still newsworthy when Arthur Cox, then the manager, tested the generosity of Lionel Pickering, now the chairman, with a succession of expensive signings that left the remainder of the old second division agog. Cox bought young players in the hope that they would not only win promotion but mount an immediate challenge at the higher level.

Thus, Sturridge remained in the reserves as Paul Kitson, Marco Gabbiadini, Paul Simpson and Tommy Johnson arrived at a combined cost of beyond £4 million, while the likes of Mark Pembroke, John Harkes and Craig Short fitted in uneasily behind.

Promotion, though, remained a holy grail. Derby became an unhappy, disorganised collection of individuals. Roy McFarland began to dismantle the side before Jim Smith succeeded where Cox had failed by wheeling and dealing his way into the FA Carling Premiership. Sturridge, liberated by his



Sturridge, the Derby County striker, whose pace is proving a thorn in the side of Premiership defences

longest first team run, scored 20 times in 39 appearances.

"Individually, we might not be as gifted as those players, but we get together with more confidence and play for each other," Sturridge says. "In those days there was so much jealousy and bickering behind the scenes. Too many people did not get on and it became more and more obvious. Those of us in the reserves knew that we did not have a chance because million-pound players were never going to be dropped."

"I thought when Roy took over that things might change. But that was not the case. He sent me on loan for

two months at Torquay — you cannot get much further away — and then brought me back just to play in the reserves. I have to say I was quite happy that he was not the manager at the start of last season because my career was going nowhere."

"The manager and his players have to be able to look each other in the eye and respect one another. If a player cannot do that, he is not relaxed, and if he is not relaxed, he will not play to his full potential. I feel I can look Jim in the eye."

Pace was always seen as Sturridge's biggest asset but questions were raised over his finishing ability. Last

season, he answered those emphatically and this time around he has excited bigger crowds by taking on defenders. His second goal against Leeds United on the opening day of the season was a contender for goal of the month. Three weeks ago, against an Arsenal side including Ian Wright of whom he has studied hours of footage, he delivered a shot that might earn him the December award.

When he lines up against Blackburn Rovers this afternoon, the days when he felt homesick despite living less than 30 minutes from his roots in Birmingham, will seem a long way away. Yet

the experiences of his older brothers, both strikers, ensure that he will not get carried away.

Simon is presently out of the Stoke City side because of a knee-ligament injury while Martin was released by Birmingham City, then managed by Smith, without making a single first-team appearance and now works in the Rover factory at Longbridge. "Martin liked the drink and the nightlife too much, so he keeps me on the straight and narrow," Sturridge says. "I am a better player, despite what he thinks, but his stories are definitely better. I am pleased it is that way around."

Ogrizovic poised to pass record

BY RUSSELL KEMPSON

AS THE matches arrive thick and fast, the injuries escalate alarmingly, club physiotherapists work overtime and the FA Carling Premiership carries on regardless. Groans and moans can be heard all over the land yet the average spectator, understandably, will offer little sympathy to the £20,000-a-week performers.

Rather more regard will be held today for Steve Ogrizovic, 39, the Coventry City goalkeeper. When he steps out at Highfield Road, for the visit of Middlesbrough, it will be his 544th appearance for the club, passing the record set by George Curtis, the former Coventry centre back, 25 years ago.

Ogrizovic, a member of the club's 1987 FA Cup-winning side, did not play for Coventry until a month before his 27th birthday, after a £72,000 move from Shrewsbury Town in 1984. He had spent the early part of his career as understudy, mostly non-playing, to Ray Clemence at Liverpool.

"To beat George's record means a tremendous amount to me," Ogrizovic said yesterday. "He is a folk hero in these parts, for what he has done for Coventry, and when I went to see him recently in hospital, where he was having a new knee fitted, he wished me all the best regarding the record."

Though still fit and healthy, Ogrizovic feels it is unlikely that he will emulate Peter Shilton, 46, who reached the milestone of 1,000 league games a week ago. "I spoke to Peter last week and what he has achieved is an absolutely tremendous feat that I don't think will ever be repeated."

he said. "I'd have to play for another nine to ten years, until I'm nearly 50, to get anywhere near it."

Middlesbrough will not rest on sentiment, especially as they have at last glimpsed the tiniest shaft of light at the end of the Premiership tunnel. The 4-2 win against Everton on Boxing Day was their first success in 14 league matches and, apparently, their casualty list has dwindled, too.

"It's just pleasing to remember what a victory is like," Bryan Robson, the Middlesbrough player-manager, said. "We've still got a lot of injuries within the club but, fortunately, the virus appears to have eased a bit in the last few days and we've only got two players down with it."

Kevin Keegan, the Newcastle United manager, has received little Christmas cheer but may have something to smile about, at last, after Tottenham Hotspur have left St James' Park.

Newcastle's title challenge has faded lately — they are without a win in seven matches — but Keith Gillespie, the winger, remains upbeat. "We still believe in ourselves," Gillespie said. "It will take just one win to turn our season round. The main problem is getting it."

Roy Keane, the Manchester United midfielder player, returns from injury, probably on the substitutes' bench, for the game at home to Leeds United.

Matthew Le Tissier, the Southampton midfielder player, should start a game for the first time in more than a month when Liverpool visit The Dell tomorrow.

Wright to learn his fate over dismissal

BY RUSSELL KEMPSON

ARSENAL are likely to hear on Monday if their appeal to have annulled Ian Wright's sending-off against Nottingham Forest a week ago has been successful. Stephen Lodge, the referee, and John Holbrook, his assistant, will spend the weekend reviewing the incident.

Lodge dismissed the England striker for allegedly "raking" Nikola Jerkan, the Forest defender, with his studs. Though Lodge did not see what happened, he took advice from Holbrook before deciding on the punishment.

Arsenal later claimed that Jerkan had been over-dramatic and that the sending-off should be reduced to a booking. The Football Association has subsequently asked the match officials to review a tape of the incident.

A punter has placed a bet of £10,000 on Manchester United to win the FA Carling Premiership. It forced Luton, the bookmaker, to cut United's odds from 9-4 to 2-1 second favourites, behind Liverpool at 7-4.

Ian Wassell, a Ladbrokes spokesman, said: "I think people are remembering how United came from behind to beat Newcastle last term." Gary Breen, the Ireland and Birmingham City central defender, is likely to be sidelined for a month after being allegedly assaulted in London. He was struck on the head, and sustained a broken hand, after being confronted by a group of men who had surrounded his car outside a restaurant.

Burns feels warm glow of success

BY KEVIN MCCARRA

VICTORY can make a man invulnerable. A week or two ago, Tommy Burns would have been wounded by the discovery that several of his players were injured, but news yesterday of injuries to Alan Stubbs, Jackie McNamara, Tom Boyd, Peter Grant and Andreas Thom did not even dent his happiness. Celtic's 2-1 win over Aberdeen at Pittodrie on Thursday night had spirited the manager away from commonplace anxiety.

The elation was also abetted by the knowledge that Paul McStay, the club captain, will play for the first time since August, against Dunfermline Athletic at home this afternoon. Burns was seeing breakthroughs everywhere and had also completed a signing.

The man in question was David Hannah, the Dundee United midfielder player, who agreed terms after talks with Celtic yesterday afternoon. Hannah's career at Tannadice had been in turmoil since he challenged the terms of his contract with the club. Were it not for yesterday's move, the matter would have gone before the courts in 1997.

Hannah, who scored in the 2-0 win over Motherwell on Thursday, started only four matches in the Bell's Scottish League first division last season. He was, however, a highly-promising player and, at 23, still has time to fulfil his potential.

The valuation of him depended on balancing his considerable talent against his restricted achievement, but he has cost Celtic £650,000. His future, however, is unlikely to be a match for McStay's illustrious past. The club cap-

tain has been badly missed for his ability to control the tempo of play. McStay has had recurring problems with an ankle on which no further surgery can be performed and Burns has delicately suggested that the player cannot again be the force he once was. All the same, the manager does think that his return carries the promise of improvement.

"We always knew Paul would come back," Burns said, "but it was hard for him when he was in the depths and it seemed as if his injury was not getting any better. He has worked so hard to come through that. The most important thing he gives us is composure."

While emotional volatility was evident at Celtic Park, there was equanimity at Ibrox. Rangers will rest Alan McLaren this afternoon and introduce Joachim Bjorklund for the match at Rugby Park.

Kilmarnock, with Bobby Williamson now confirmed as manager, defeated Hibernian 1-0 at Easter Road on Boxing Day. Their planning for this fixture, though, is complicated by the flu affecting the squad. Paul Wright, though, may be ready to return from injury.

As Kilmarnock rise, other clubs are falling towards them. Hibernian have yet to clarify matters at Easter Road, where Jocky Scott is manager on a caretaker basis, and they play Aberdeen at Pittodrie.

Motherwell, whose form is troubled, meet Heart of Midlothian at Tynecastle and the premier division's lowliest club, Raith Rovers, are at home to the swiftly-improving Dundee United.

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CROWNING GLORY 39

Pearce's moment of truth when England were in a spot

SPORT

AMERICAN FOOTBALL 41

Packing a punch: Green Bay's man of God in defense



SATURDAY DECEMBER 28 1996

Rain thwarts Zimbabwe's attempts to stamp their authority on second Test

Sorry England find a silver lining

FROM SIMON WILDE IN HARARE

HARARE (second day of five): Zimbabwe, with eight first-innings wickets in hand, are 63 runs behind England

THANK the heavens — literally — for the rainy season in Southern Africa, for it may offer the only hope of England avoiding a sensational defeat at the hands of Zimbabwe, until now acknowledged as the weakest Test cricketing nation in the world. The decision to stage the first Test tour here when the weather is most unpredictable was taken to fit in with England's visit next month to New Zealand: it may just provide the visitors with an inglorious route to salvation.

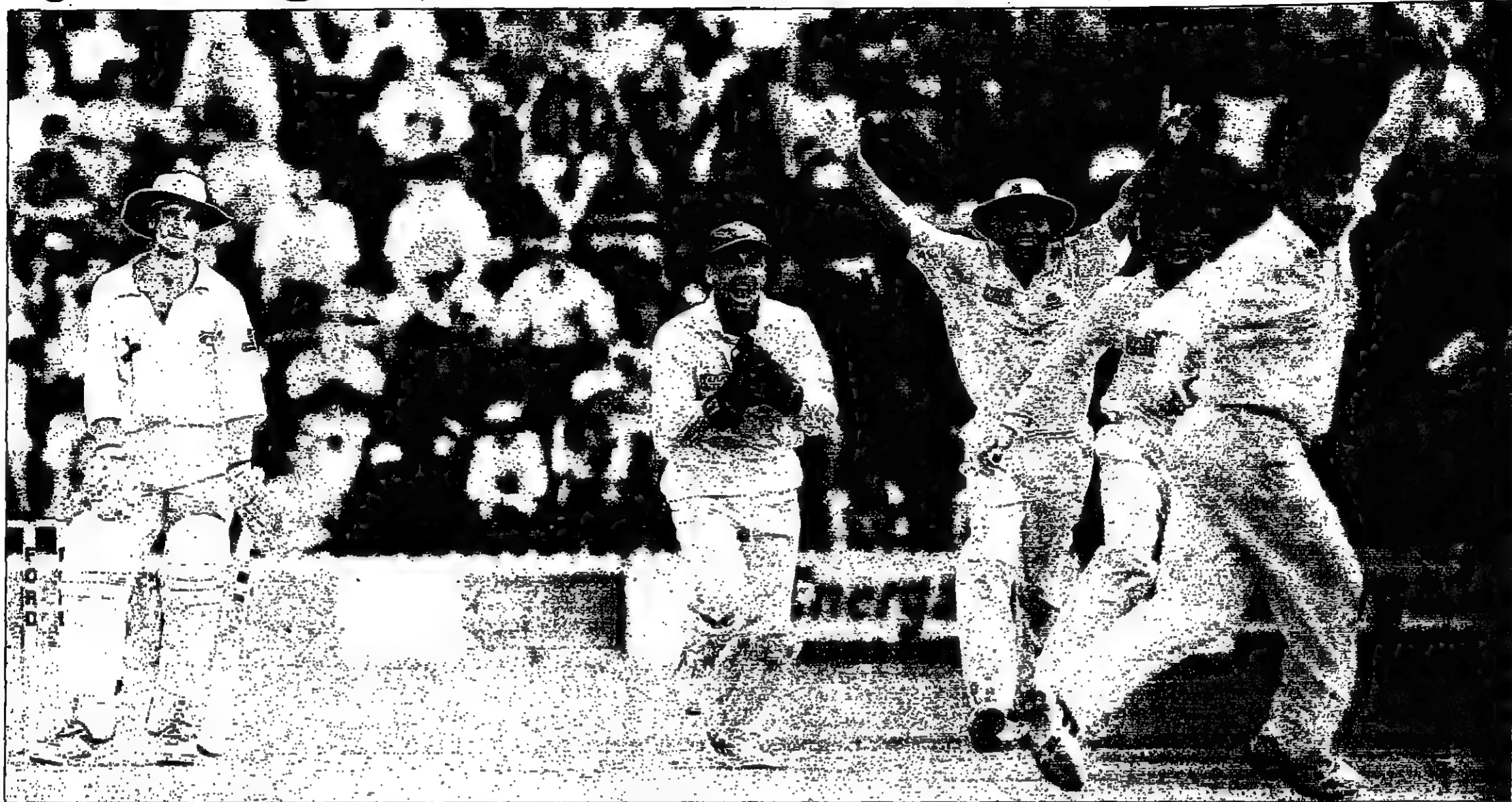
When the skies opened four balls after tea yesterday, Zimbabwe were 93 for two, admittedly grinding along in first gear but within 63 runs of England's paltry first-innings total and showing every indication of knowing how to bat

McGrath's riposte 40
Daddy Donald 40
Hollis's example 40

as long as they like on this untried cake of a pitch. Grant Flower and David Houghton, both of whom have compiled interminable Test centuries here before, are together and look all too eager to produce repeat performances.

The rainfall was so heavy that it was soon apparent that there would be no further play on the second day of this second Test match, thus ensuring the loss of a further 29 overs to the 17 that were cut from the first day. If there are to be further interruptions before Monday evening, England should not yet give up hope of escape, but unless the rains settle in for a long stay, they will not do so without showing that their batting has rediscovered its spine.

Desperate though their position is, England did not do badly in the four hours of play. Crawley and Tufnell, their last pair, held out for 40 minutes and added 19 runs before Tufnell, having reached nine — the second highest score of his Test career — with the help of a streaky boundary past the slip cordon, was unlucky to see a ball from Streak deflect off his midriff and onto his stumps. Even so, England's



Croft, far right, leads the England fielders in an animated but unsuccessful appeal for the dismissal of Grant Flower, the Zimbabwe batsman, yesterday. Photograph: Clive Mason / Allsport

156 was their lowest Test total since Cape Town last January. Defending such a score puts tremendous pressure on a bowling attack and, in the circumstances, Mulally and Gough gave England just the start they needed by maintaining a disciplined line and length, and were quickly rewarded with the wicket of Decker, who nibbled at an outswinger from Mulally and was caught behind.

That success brought Campbell to the wicket, the least likely of Zimbabwe's batsmen to curb his aggressive instincts to suit the pitch. Sure enough, he played positively and produced his favoured cuts, and although Zimbabwe reached lunch without further loss, six overs after the interval Campbell fell

trying to cut again, but only succeeded in steering a ball from White to Thorpe as first slip. Although the ball was a long hop, England were at least working to a plan, having installed a second slip for Campbell and sent White over the wicket to vary the line of attack.

England were to experience no more joy as Flower and Houghton demonstrated just how to bat in the conditions, eschewing all risks and waiting with infinite patience for the bad balls to come along. To England's credit there were few of these and in 25 overs to tea, this pair added just 47.

By then, Flower, who two years ago batted 11 hours on this ground for an unbeaten double century to set up Zimbabwe's only win in their

21 previous Tests, was 33 not out, having scored 17 in the two-hour afternoon session. So far he has spent 196 minutes at the crease and if he can carry on in the same vein today, it is inevitable England will be batted out of the game.

The value of Flower's innings was not lost on the patient home crowd or on two former England batsmen on the ground who would have known just how to sit on the spilt here: Geoff Boycott and Trevor Bailey. Indeed, Bailey's position as the maker of the slowest half-century in Test cricket (357 minutes in an Ashes Test in 1958-59) appeared in grave danger until Flower opened up against the spinners, twice hitting Croft down the ground and driving Tufnell for four.

This begged the question as to whether England have picked the right bowling attack, as the spinners are experiencing less joy than in the first Test and a fourth seamer — either Silverwood or Caddick might have found this pitch to their liking — might have served better. That said, Croft came close to having Flower caught at the wicket by Stewart off a leg-side flick five overs before tea.

The "super slo-mo" television replays suggested Flower should have been given out, but at full speed the issue is less clear. The thought processes of Russell Tiffin, the umpire, may have been distracted by another frenetic dance from England fielders, in which case they have only themselves to blame.

ENGLAND: First innings

N V Knight c A Flower b Olonga	16
(33min, 20 balls, 1 four)	
*M A Atherton c Campbell b White	18
(38min, 40 balls, 1 six)	
TA J Stewart c G W Flower b Streak	19
(22min, 44 balls, 1 four)	
N Hoggins c A Flower b Streak	11
(73min, 53 balls, 1 four)	
G P Thorpe c Decker b Streak	8
(27min, 28 balls)	
J P Crawley not out	47
(218min, 160 balls, 3 fours)	
C White c Campbell b White	9
(23min, 47 balls)	
R D S Croft c G W Flower b White	14
(70min, 55 balls, 2 fours)	
D Gough b Streak	2
(9min, 8 balls)	
A D Mulally c and b White	0
(2min, 2 balls)	
P G Tufnell b Streak	9
(57min, 37 balls, 1 four)	
Edna (to 1, to 5, w 1, nb 5)	12
Total (28.1 overs, 363min)	156
FALL OF WICKETS: 1-24 (Atherton 8), 2-46 (G W Flower 3), 3-133 (Crawley 34), 4-134 (Crawley 34)	

ZIMBABWE: First innings

G W Flower not out	33
(120min, 144 balls, 2 fours)	
M H Decker c Stewart b Mulally	2
(10min, 16 balls)	
*A D R Campbell c Thorpe b White	22
(71min, 53 balls, 2 fours)	
D L Houghton not out	28
(101min, 83 balls, 1 four)	
Edna (to 6, nb 4)	10
Total (28.1 overs, 363min)	156
FALL OF WICKETS: 1-24 (Atherton 8), 2-46 (G W Flower 3), 3-133 (Crawley 34), 4-134 (Crawley 34)	

TA Flower, A C Walker, G J White, P A Stanger, M H Decker, EA Brandes and H R Olonga to bat.
FALL OF WICKETS: 1-5 (G W Flower 3), 2-46 (G W Flower 17)
BOWLING: Mulally 12-2-22-1 (1 four); 2-14-1, 5-1-2-0; Gough 11-5-13-0 (nb 5); four; 5-5-0-0; Croft 8-0-25-0 (1 four); 3-0-11-0, 5-0-12-0; White 7-4-11-1 (1 four); 7-1-13-1, 0-4-0-0; Tufnell 10-3-15-0 (nb 1; 1 four; one six).
SCORING NOTES: Second day: Second new ball: 147-6 (80 overs) at 10.20pm.
ZIMBABWE: First innings
G W Flower not out: 33 (120min, 144 balls, 2 fours)
M H Decker c Stewart b Mulally: 2 (10min, 16 balls)
*A D R Campbell c Thorpe b White: 22 (71min, 53 balls, 2 fours)
D L Houghton not out: 28 (101min, 83 balls, 1 four)
Edna (to 6, nb 4): 10
Total (28.1 overs, 363min): 156
FALL OF WICKETS: 1-24 (Atherton 8), 2-46 (G W Flower 3), 3-133 (Crawley 34), 4-134 (Crawley 34)

Racing is hit hard as frost bites

By RUSSELL KEMPSON

HORSE racing has again borne the brunt of the icy weather sweeping the country, with the meetings at Kempton Park and Wetherby yesterday both called off. Three of the five cards scheduled for today, at Newbury, Folkestone and Huntingdon, have also fallen by the wayside. Newcastle will have an inspection this morning, but the all-weather track at Wolverhampton is unlikely to be affected.

Richard Pridham, clerk of the course at Newbury, said: "The ground is frozen and there is no prospect of the frost coming out in time. The forecast was for -5C and no rise above zero. It is pretty bleak at the moment." Newbury is also due to host racing on Monday and will have an inspection tomorrow.

A spokesman for Huntingdon said: "We had to abandon the meeting due to frost. The snow has all gone, but the problem is where the ground is bare from being raced on. If we hadn't raced previously this season, we would probably have been all right."

The loss of Kempton proved to be somebody else's gain. Ring & Bryner, the caterer, donated the fresh food prepared for the racegoers to homeless charities. "We have sent our fresh food to London to be distributed," a company spokesman said.

Football has so far lost only two of today's fixtures — Crystal Palace against Stoke City at Selhurst Park, in the Nationwide League first division, and Luton Town versus Wycombe Wanderers at Kenilworth Road, in the second division.

However, many clubs were holding pitch inspections this morning, including Bristol Rovers, Notts County, Peterborough United, Rochdale, Stockport County, Colchester United and Darlington.

Leopardstown preview, page 37

Lacroix's arrival highlights perils of new import policy

By DAVID HANDS, RUGBY CORRESPONDENT

LONDON already boasts the highest points-scorer in world rugby union, Michael Lynagh, and its most-capped player, Philippe Sella; both plying their trade at Saracens. Yesterday the capital welcomed Thierry Lacroix, the leading points-scorer in the 1995 World Cup, to its increasingly cosmopolitan ranks when the Frenchman signed for Harlequins.

Lacroix, 29, joins two of his compatriots, Laurent Cabannes and Laurent Bénédict, at the Stoop Memorial Ground, where he will spend the next 18 months after signing a deal worth some £250,000. He is likely to make his Courage Clubs Championship debut on January 5 in the derby meeting with Wasps at Loftus Road.

Yet Lacroix's arrival, from Dax by way of Durban, will create another headache for the England selectors, who will see yet another of the game's key decision-making positions filled by a foreigner. Lacroix fulfils Harlequins' need for a top-flight goalkicker, he can play centre or even on the wing, but his reputation is primarily at stand-off half, where he will probably supplant Paul Challinor.

His arrival will also coincide with the return to rugby league of Gary Connolly and Robbie Paul, two midfield players who have made a significant impact with Harlequins. Connolly has partnered Will Carling regularly at centre and Paul has offered valuable cover in most positions among the backs, but they are due to rejoin Wigan Warriors and Bradford Bulls respectively on January 11.

"This has tied in nicely with their return," Dick Best, the Harlequins director of rugby, said. "We have been talking with Thierry off and on for the last 18 months; he's a first-choice goalkicker, an expert tactician, one of those players who can change a game by making the right decision

at the right time." Harlequins have a direct link with Lacroix through Andy Keast, who coached him through a Currie Cup season with Natal before returning to England to begin this season as chief coach at the Stoop.

Natal had little hesitation in playing Lacroix at stand-off, even though France have played him more frequently at centre in his 38 internationals, during which he has scored 367 points, more than any other Frenchman. Of that tally, 116 points came during the World Cup last year, which France concluded with a win in the third-place play-off against England, though Lacroix's form slumped last season and he was dropped after the game with Ireland.

Assuming Lacroix makes an immediate mark, and that Leicester will field Joel Stransky, of South Africa,

in their letter J shirt as soon as possible, eight of the 12 first division clubs will field non-English players in the No 10 jersey in the new year. There is no great encouragement to be drawn lower down the leagues. Of the four clubs pressing for promotion from the second division, two — Richmond and Bedford — field Welshmen at stand-off, and of the other two, Rob Andrew, of Newcastle, has retired from international rugby and Les Harris, of Coventry, will not see 30 again.

All the more reason, then, that the England management should turn out in force at Loftus Road today, where Wasps and Northampton parade two genuine contenders in Alex King and Paul Grayson. If Mike Catt — whose rib injury keeps him out of Bath's game with Sale tomorrow — is under threat as the England pivot, then it can only be from Grayson, who helped England to the five nations' championship last season, and King, who has been the bench replacement this season.

England's considerations are not necessarily those of the wealthier clubs. It has been apparent all season that Harlequins' Achilles' heel has been their goal-kicking. Carling has enjoyed mixed success in that role while Challinor, now 27, has never recovered the form of which he sometimes appeared capable in his younger days and seems unlikely to be given many further opportunities.

Two more stand-offs with points to prove will face each other in the Welsh League at Cardiff. Neil Jenkins, of Pontypriid, lost the Wales No 10 shirt to Jonathan Davies earlier this season, and will be keen to prove the selectors wrong. Eddie Jones, the Pontypriid manager, said: "Neil's first responsibility is to the team and not to his own individual cause."

Picman's adventure, page 38
London pride, page 38



Lacroix expert tactician

Vialli could miss chance to impress

By BRIAN GLANVILLE

CESARE MALDINI, Italy's new team manager, flies into London today to watch Chelsea play Sheffield Wednesday. He will be able to assess Gianfranco Zola and the much-improved Roberto di Matteo. But unless he comes off the bench as a substitute, it is unlikely that Maldini will be able to run the rule over Gianluca Vialli.

This will be frustrating for both manager and player for, since the resignation from the team management of Arrigo Sacchi, the way seemed clear for Vialli to resume his career with the Azzurri. He and Sacchi have been at daggers drawn since Sacchi dropped him from the 1994 World cup squad.

Just when it seemed that there might be a rapprochement, Sacchi put his foot in it by revealing that he had taken polls about Vialli among Italy's players. Initially, the result was negative: that was when Milan players dominated the squad. Then, when Vialli's Juventus team-mates were predominant, the vote was in his favour. Humiliated and infuriated, Vialli renewed his boycott of the national team.

Di Matteo has had a couple of poor games for Italy, after which there was speculation there that Chelsea's training was not the kind he needed. Zola, of course, has been in superb form in the last two games, in which he has scored three goals, a sublime solo against West Ham and two pieces of supreme opportunism at Villa Park.

He seems sure to keep his place against Northern Ireland in Palermo on January 22. Di Matteo should at least be in the squad but Vialli may find his way barred by his ex-Juventus partner, Fabrizio Ravanelli, now of Middlesbrough.

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Weekend View, page 43
Derby's lost gem, page 43



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SATURDAY DECEMBER 28 1996



Ain't no stopping us now

As millions of Britons book their summer family holidays over the next four weeks in their five most popular countries — Spain, France, Greece, Italy and Portugal — millions more will be searching for new destinations as far away from Europe as they can get and in parts of the world that mass tourism hasn't yet reached.

As we approach the millennium, one of the most significant trends in travel is that we are taking more holidays, shorter holidays, and increasingly buying them tailor-made. Four, five or six holidays a year are no longer exceptional. With return flights to Bangkok, Peking, Rio de Janeiro or Nairobi on offer for about £350, and flights to inland Spain and France for about £150, we are also travelling to remoter areas of the world and the remoter parts of Europe — to the new nations of the east and inland from the Mediterranean coast.

Short city breaks are boom-

ing, with British Airways Holidays solidly booked for weekends as far away as New York, Boston or Toronto. Over-50s who once wintered in Spain are now going with Saga for four-week holidays in the Thai sun for £300 a week. Another sign of the times is that Saga, which deals with the over-50s, has been expanding by 30 per cent a year for the past three years, with significant growth to Canada and the United States as well as cruising.

Ask tour operators specialising in adventurous holidays about new destinations for 1997 and the countries constantly mentioned are in Latin America (Peru, Chile, Mexico, Cuba, Costa Rica or Belize) or Asia (Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam). For intrepid travellers, The Yemen, Iran and Uzbekistan earned frequent mentions, as did Egypt and South Africa, both of which are proving highly popular.

It is the young, especially the hundreds of thousands of stu-

dents who set out to explore the world during their gap year or university vacations, who are the trailfinders — and a growing army of retired and affluent over-50s who no longer have to plunk their children on Mediterranean beaches who increasingly follow in their footsteps.

Among the top ten 1997 destinations from STA, which specialises in student travel, are Guatemala for £488, Kazakhstan for £541, Estonia for £252 and Laos for £540. Campus Travel offers Tallin at the even cheaper price of £205 return, Peking for £348, Mexico for £386 and Perth for £641. It costs a lot more than that for the oldies but there are a lot of intrepid over-50s in the 1990s with money to spend, a sense of

adventure, and a determination to see the world and stay ahead of the crowds.

That is why Latin America is so strongly tipped as a continent that is now coming out. Chile seemed almost empty when he was there earlier this year, says Nick van Gruisen of Worldwide Journeys and Expeditions. At Journey Latin America, which now has five different tours to Peru to meet demand, Steve Collins speaks equally enthusiastically of the attractions of Mexico (unanimously considered good value for money), Chile and Brazil. Any traveller who goes to Latin America once, he says, will undoubtedly return to savour a continent which offers the spectacular Andes, the second high-

est and longest range of mountains in the world, Lake Titicaca, the Atacama desert, the civilisations of the Aztecs, the Incas and the Mayas, as well as rainforest and Caribbean beaches.

Unless you backpack, Latin American holidays don't come cheap. A 24-day holiday with JLA costs from £2,500 but includes accommodation, guides and all flights. A two-week individual, tailor-made tour with Worldwide Journeys and Expeditions will also cost from £2,500 but as Mr van Gruisen is quick to point out, on his tour of Chile and Patagonia you get to see two of the wonders of the world — the

Galapagos and Machu Pichu — in one holiday.

Although only 2 per cent of British holidaymakers go on cruises, cruising is suddenly a boom industry. An estimated 420,000 British holidaymakers went on a cruise this year, up 20 per cent for the second year in succession. Thomson announced last week that it is chartering two new ships and will offer 74,000 cruising holidays next year, starting from £399 a week.

Airtours, Fred Olsen, Saga and P&O (offering a 92-day world tour on the new *Araclia* at £38,380 a head) also have new ships in 1997. The Mediterranean and Caribbean are the favoured areas. A 97-night round-the-world cruise starting in January 1998 stopping at 31 ports at a lead-in price of £6,936 — or £71.50 a day — was announced by Saga this week.

Yet at an average cost per person of £500 — £2,000 for a family of four — most British holidaymakers will travel on

short hauls to Europe next summer and most will still be on package tours. Islands are the popular choice, with Majorca remaining as Britain's favourite holiday destination, and Ibiza and Menorca, the Greek Islands of Corfu, Crete and Zakynthos, the Canaries and Cyprus all featuring in the Top Ten along with Spain, Turkey, the United States, Portugal, the Caribbean and Italy.

Airtours announced a £30 million price-cutting campaign last week but the biggest discounts are on the earliest bookings. With the British economy in better health, the feelgood factor is working for travel too, and all tour operators report that business is booming. Bookings for winter holidays are up by almost 20 per cent and Going Places says that early summer bookings are up by 30 per cent, an increase of 600,000 summer holidays already booked.

Continued on page 2

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There are three days left until 1997. Either you are in a panic because there are only two more shopping days until January 1, or you exchanged presents with someone over Christmas who was pressed for time, strapped for cash, and couldn't be bothered to give it much thought.

For there is no more dismal Christmas present than a calendar. There you are on Christmas morning, frolicking in tinsel, and shredded wrapping paper, when someone hands you a thin parcel suspiciously lacking in rigidity.

The sparkly paper falls away and you are left holding the *Woman & Home* "Flowers" calendar for 1997. Oh yes, another year is on its way. Christmas is over already, at quarter to lunchtime on

the 25th. Time to start scribbling into your calendar things like "appointment with Dr Fussyke, March 18" and "Road tax, August 30", and the dream is over.

The novelty calendar is a 20th century version of the death's head that scowled on the desks of intellectual men in ages past — a skull that reminded proud men of their inevitable fate as food for worms. So, in a not dissimilar way, does the gift-calendar prick your seasonal pomp, and remind you not to rest easy in your festive jollity.

What can be more depressing than a calendar? Every one of the forthcoming 365 days gets its own little line and prepares to stare reproachfully down at you from the kitchen wall. Do you have what it takes to fill that line? Or is

your life nothing but an empty sham? Or have you something to look forward to? In which case pencil it in and consider the days in between a write-off.

If, however, you have not been bought a calendar, because you are well loved by all and sundry, and received instead socks and potted conifers, then you will need to buy one. And very little, in the way of horological stationery, is better value at this time of year than calendars.

Avoid at all costs the comedy calendar. I must highlight in this regard the *"All I need to know about life I learnt from my pig"* calendar. It features a different



BY GILES COREN

porker in chortlesome pose for each month of the year, but the hilarious pig-related truisms, while side-splitting as you rifle the pages on first receiving the calen-

dar, will be jaded by the time their month comes round. A phrase like, "Keep your snout to the wheel and your tail to the wind," for example, could ruin the whole of July.

But you do not want to think of July just yet, that is the problem. You do not want to flick to the beach pictures in the middle of a year through which you have not yet adequately ploughed to earn the holiday they connote.

If anything, you might want to invest in a truly useful calendar, such as the *Amateur Gardening* effort (£4.95 and already reduced to £2.95 in John Lewis). Here you have genuinely useable stuff drip-

ped in a chronologically efficient way: "March: commence vegetable seed sowing of peas, broad beans and parsnips. Use cloches for extra protection... August: herbs will shortly require drying for winter use." Fantastic.

But do not buy any novelty golf calendars. Perhaps the worst is the *Most Difficult Golf Holes in the World* monstrosity. It consists of photographs of greens superimposed on Himalayan cliff faces. If you have already been given one of these, get some new relatives.

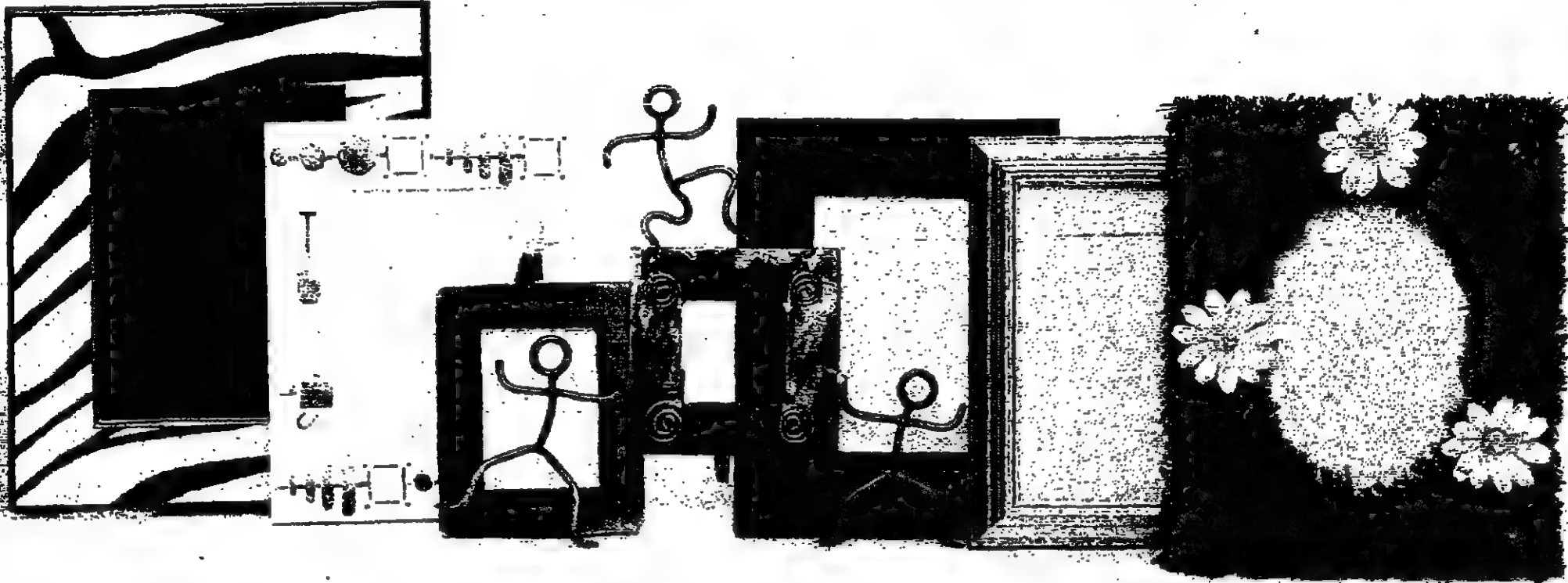
Heritage calendars are equally grim, such as *Reflections of Britain* and *London Calendar* (both still £3.45). These feature places that do not really exist, and make you yearn for one which shows Kentish Town Road in the rush hour, or the Winchester Bypass at night. Your own life should not be

less beautiful than your calendar.

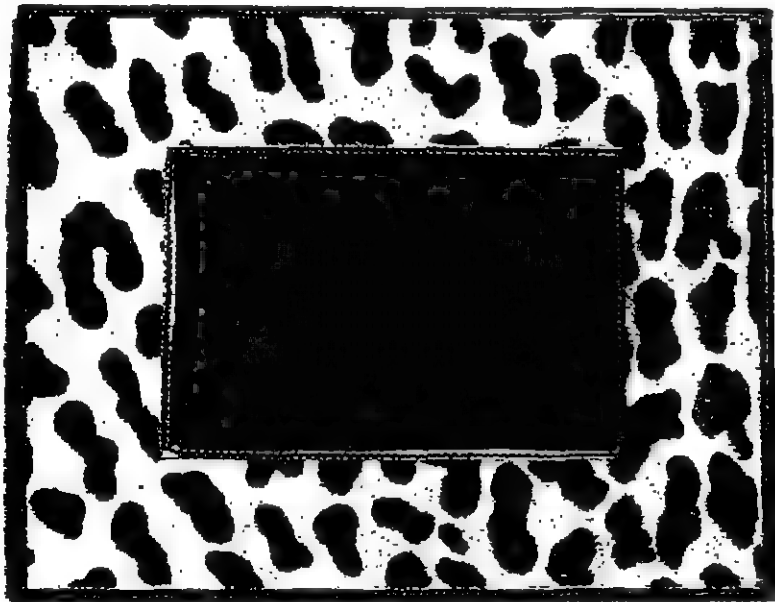
There is a plethora of "impressionist" calendars (do they represent, perhaps, not the order of days as they really are, but as they seem to be to the artist?). There are recipe calendars, like *The Chocoholics' Gourmet Calendar*, if you want to hit January 1998 a different shape from January 1997, and *The Cartoonists*, if you want to go mad. A cartoon for April with the caption "He's outside, toilet-training the dog" will not seem quite so hilarious after a month on the wall as it does now.

Which is true of pretty much everything they put on calendars. So forget it. Don't make the stations rich. You are going to have to live 1997, which is bad enough. You don't have to measure it on a wall-hanging as well.

DES JENSON



Picture the hippest style for squares



PICTURE frames can be a cheerful way to experiment with the latest luminous colours and animal prints or to add humour to the family portrait. It does not matter that they may never become family heirlooms — alongside your staid silver frames on the mantelpiece they will add a little light relief.

SUDI PIGOTT looks at some of the snappiest frames around.



ABOVE (from left): "Och" picture frame in bright orange fur, £17.50, from Romer, 258 Archway Road, London N6; zebra-striped cowhide frame, £170, from Gucci, 33 Bond Street, W1 (0171-499 1081); handpainted wooden frame with garden motifs by Anne Taylor, £18.95, from Lizzie's, 143 Northcote Road, SW11 (0171-738 2973); small resin frame in aqua, £12.50, from Heal's, 196 Tottenham Court Road, W1 (0171-638 1686); wrought-iron frames featuring stick people, £8.99-£12.99, for Disaster Design (stockists, 01323 441444); classic wooden frame in blue or green, £15.95, from Heal's (as before); gold leaf-effect frame, £8.95, from John Lewis, Oxford Street, W1 (0171-629 7711) and branches nationwide; "Grow" frame in astroturf with daisies, £18.50, from Romer (as before).

FAR LEFT: leopard-spotted cowhide frame, £150, from Gucci (as before).

LEFT: Disaster Design wrought-iron frames (as before).

'The trend is to escape the crowds'

IN AND OUT

- Still in for 1997: Egypt, Syria and Jordan.
- Newly in for 1997: China, especially Yunnan, Peking and Shanghai Xian; Latin America: The Yemena.
- Do go to Albania, Romania or Poland.
- Don't go to Prague — you're a decade too late.
- Do go to St Bart's, Barbados, Nevis or Anguilla.
- Don't go to Antigua.
- Do try Kerala, especially Cochin and Varikala.
- Don't go to Goa: been there, done that.
- Do get a taste of Mandela's South Africa — but go to Cape Town, not Johannesburg. Or try Zanzibar, Botswana, Malawi, Namibia or Zimbabwe.
- Don't go to Kenya.
- Do try the third generation TGV Duplex and travel at 270 kmh on the double-decker between Paris and Lyon.



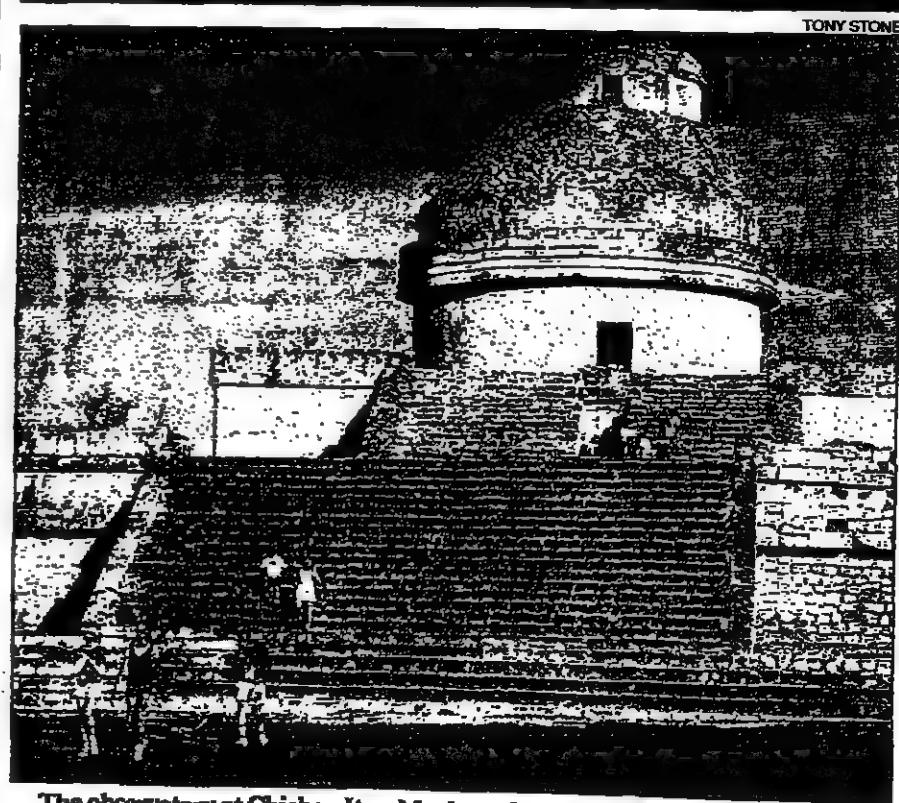
The Blyde River Canyon in South Africa, which is good value for British tourists

ULTRA SMART

- Africa: Singha Game reserve in South Africa: elephant safaris in Zimbabwe and Botswana.
- Far East: Saman Villas — probably the most exquisite new beach hotel in Sri Lanka. Oberoi in Lombok — an easier place to escape to than Moyo Island which is east of there.
- Caribbean: Gona Island — puts Necker in the shade.
- India: Nilaya Heronage, Goa — the first luxury retreat in the subcontinent, with only eight rooms. Maharajah of Jodhpur's Royal Camp — the ultimate way to avoid other tourists.
- Europe: Hacienda San Rafael (south of Seville): Chateau de Bagatelle near Lyon — probably the best castle in Europe.

Sources: Bruce Palling, Western and Oriental Travel, 0174-221-0877; Alipton, Eggeson, Abercrombie & Kent, 0171-730-9000.

THE BACKPACKERS' TOP TEN



The observatory at Chichen Itza, Mexico, which is a hot destination for 1997

Guatemala: one of Latin America's most colourful countries, Guatemala is cultural, chaotic and full of character. Ascend to the beautiful highland region to discover verdant hills, volcanoes, lakes and Mayan ruins; or descend into the dense rainforest jungle and be consumed within the steep-sided pyramids of the Tikal temple complex. £483.

Zanzibar: stunning palm-fringed beaches, crystal blue sea, coral reefs coupled with a laid-back atmosphere. £518.

Trans-Siberian Railway: 7,000 miles in seven days, the Trans-Siberian railway from Moscow to Peking is the epic adventure for trendy transpotters. Watch the Mongolian tundra, Manchurian steppes and the "Old Silk" route through Uzbekistan's desert chug past your window. £295 one way.

United Arab Emirates: red deserts where the nomadic Bedu people wander, green oases and blue seas for buddies to dive with the dolphins. £325.

Kazakhstan: rugged beauty in abundance and adventure awaits any trekker among the ice-peaked mountains, deep forested valleys and wild rivers of Zailiysky and Kungey Alatau mountains. £594.

Alaska: the Last Frontier — glaciers the size of Switzerland, enormous ice fields, deep fjords, active volcanoes and lush rainforests. £541.

Tallinn: founded in the 13th century, the architecture and ambience of this port city was shaped by the Russians, Swedes and Germans. £252.

Reykjavik: northernmost capital city, brightly painted wooden buildings, pollution-free fresh air and tempting seafood restaurants. £288.

Ethiopia: the country is emerging as an attractive African option. Head into the exterior to find ancient cities like Axum, extraordinary churches carved from rock at Lalibela or amazing wildlife in the plains. £570.

Laos: it leaves Thailand, Vietnam and Cambodia standing. Hire a bicycle and explore the capital, Vientiane, on the banks of the Mekong River, or travel to the enchanting former royal city of Luang Prabang in the north, surrounded by mountains encompassing 32 Buddhist temples. £540.

● Source: STA Travel, 0171-361 6262; all prices for return flights.

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JERSEY

Continued from page 1

Be warned though: they say there will be nearly a million fewer last-minute holidays next summer.

As the pound strengthens against the franc (some operators believe the exchange rate could get to nine to the pound by next summer), France is certainly expecting a better year. Brittany Ferries says bookings for gites and camping holidays are up by 20 per cent. Yet it is Spain which will once again be the most popular country for a holiday (7.7 million visits were made by Britons in 1995 against 6.4 million to France, according to the Government's *Travel Trends*). Spain is certainly cheaper than France and small towns such as Ronda well worth the detour.

A trend towards escaping the crowds is occurring in Europe too. More and more Spanish holidaymakers, as Tony Mamalico of Mundi Color points out, are heading away from the overcrowded coast to £20-£30-a-night villas

TOP SELLERS		
WINTER 96/97	SUMMER 1997	ON THE UP
Canaries	Balearics	Mexico
Mainland Spain	Greek Islands	Dominican Republic
USA	Mainland Spain	Egypt
Caribbean	Canaries	
Majorca	Turkey	GOING DOWN
Portugal	USA	France
Tunisia	Portugal	Greece
India	Caribbean	Morocco
Egypt	Cyprus	
Far East	Italy	Source: Thomson

and farmhouses in the Pyrenees or to such areas as Gaudin or Alpujarras in Andalusia for walking and riding, cookery or painting holidays. Aware meanwhile of the inhibiting image of the Costa del Sol, the authorities are steadily blowing up most of the eyesores on the coast.

Another smash hit last summer was Italy where the British benefited from the weak lira. Its popularity, reflecting the enthusiasm in

Britain for all things Italian, will continue in 1997.

Greece, which will be more competitively priced in 1997, is set to recover from a disappointing summer last year and operators report that the Algarve is back in fashion, as are Malta and Tunisia. The boom in Turkish holidays seems unstoppable and summer bookings are already up by 40 per cent on last year.

Enjoy your holidays wherever you go.

The art of picking up a smart bargain

Advertised as "bumper bonanzas" with "unmissable reductions", the winter sales are heaven for shopaholics. But remember that they are not organised as an exercise in goodwill to customers; the shopkeepers are simply trying to shift stock they have been unable to sell.

A fantastic price-cut can pump the adrenalin and cloud your judgment. Sometimes, even though a piece is bright fuchsia Lurex, three sizes too small and will not go with anything else in your wardrobe, you can kid yourself it is a bargain. When sales shopping, think back to the disasters you have bought in the past. And remember that when a £1,000 dress is down to only £400, you have still spent £400. Treat the sales as you would normal shopping: if you like something and it is the right price, buy it. Do not be swayed by a big reduction.

To prepare yourself for sale shopping, you need a sturdy shoulder bag and what my mother would call "sensible" shoes. Also, take another look at what you already have so that you can colour co-ordinate your bargains. Forget Prada-style mis-matching — that was last year's fad.

Good buys can generally be found in tailoring, where you often discover that jackets, skirts and trousers are sold as separates, which is good for the pear-shaped, petite and tall. However, if you cannot find the size you want, add the rough cost of an alteration, say £10-£15, and then reassess.

Coats seem to be a good buy, though the more timeless classics have smaller reductions. For dresses, buy strappy evening numbers that can double as day dresses in summer. Designer evening labels at department stores are good value because the reductions tend to be large.

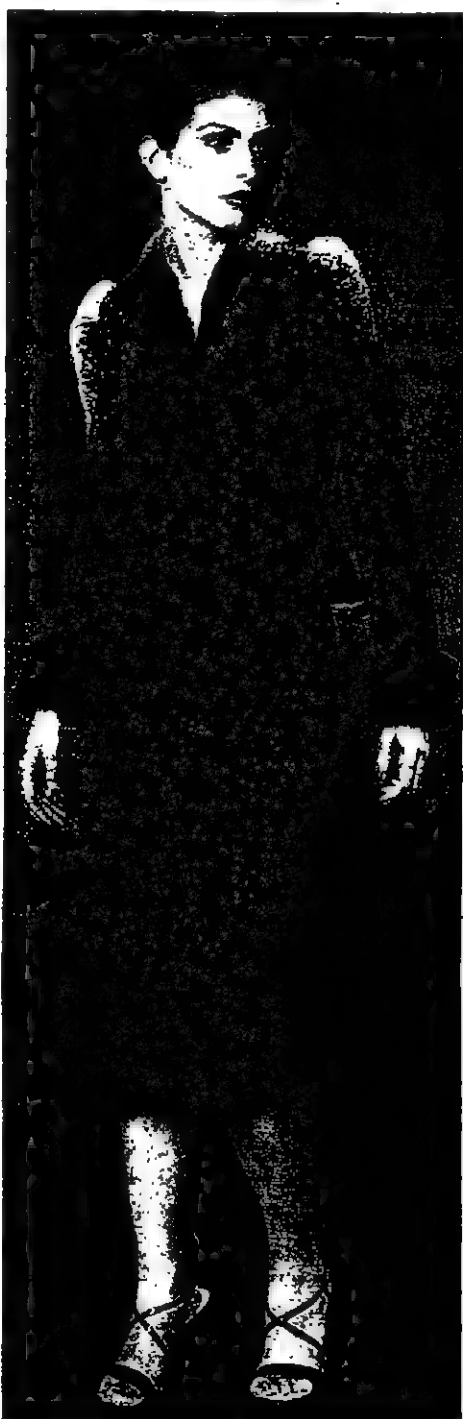
For added glamour, root out bias-cut examples, like the dress shown bottom right, making sure that they are a good fit, because alterations here can be tricky and expensive.

Things to avoid include cheap fashion-fad items in colours and styles that obviously date. However, the acid brights of the summer may just bring you through to next year, and chocolate tones will be here for a while. But steer clear of cheap black nylon.

Styles and silhouettes to look out for are one-shoulder tops, asymmetric hemlines, lace, pretty florals and frills.

Happy shopping, and keep a level head in the scrum.

Heath Brown offers the intelligent fashion shopper's guide to the sales: what's a snip, what's a must-buy and what to avoid despite the big reduction



ABOVE: Black-and-white snowball jacket with black fur trim collar, was £2,799 now £879; matching skirt, was £799 now £179, John Galiano, Harrods, Knightsbridge, SW1 (0171-730 1234). Black, fine strappy sandals, were £49.99 now £10, Ravel, 184-186 Oxford Street, London W1, 58 the Arndale Centre, Manchester, and branches nationwide (0171-631 0224)

RIGHT: Chocolate-brown strappy satin dress, was £579 now £299, Pearce Florida, Harrods (as above). Cream, fine strappy sandals, were £49.99 now £10, Ravel (as above)



ABOVE: Lime green bouclé coat, was £109 now £99.99, Oasis, selected branches nationwide (0171-452 1000). Grey stripe cashmere sweater, was £299 now £149.50, Betty Jackson, 311 Brompton Road, London SW7 (0171-589 7884). Aubergine wool gaberdine knee-length skirt, was £89 now £39, Nicole Farhi at Fenwicks, Bond Street, W1 (0171-243 9900). Brown leather shopper bag, was £189 now £94.50, Jane Shilton, Harrods, SW1 (0171-730 1234). All photographs: Richard Burns. Hair and make-up: Sally Kvalheim. Styling: Amanda Uppeal

THREE OF A KIND

Chenille, the soft, plush, corded knit that is more than velvet but less than fake fur, is the perfect comfort clothing to wrap up in with style H.B.



Tattoo roll-neck sweater, £299, Betty Jackson, 311 Brompton Road, London SW3 (0171-589 7884)

Midnight blue silver-studded V-neck, £54, French Connection, branches nationwide (0171-580 2507)

Lime zip-front cardigan, £19.99, Oasis, 202 Regent Street, W1, and branches nationwide (0171-452 1000)



Contemplation.

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GLOG'S



GARDEN ANSWERS

STEPHEN ANDERTON
replies to readers' letters

Q I have grown two bird of paradise plants, *Strelitzia reginae*, from seed in the hope of getting them to flower. They are four years old, 3ft high and in 12in pots. They are fed and watered weekly with Tomorite, and stood outside from May to August. One is healthy, but the other produces leaves which turn brown beneath and eventually yellow.

A Strelitzias like to be pot-bound, and in that condition they will sometimes flower in five years from seed, given sufficient light. I suspect you have two problems. First, you have potted them on too soon, so the roots are kept constantly too moist. Second, you may be overfeeding with potash-rich food. Keep the plants quite dry during the winter, and do not feed again until you see vigorous growth and new leaves next year. When you start to water again regularly, in spring, give the poorer plant a dose of systemic fungicide. Check that the soil level is not above the root/stem junction; strelitzias like to hoist themselves an inch or two above the compost so drainage is really sharp at the neck.

Q We have a 20ft holly which berries well but the top third has become short of leaf. Can we safely cut the trunk off where it starts to get thin, or is there a way of making the top thicken up again?

A Hollies are long-lived trees, and can reach as much as 40ft in 150 years. As they start to die of old age, they will become thin and then die back. It is perfectly possible to cut back old hollies but it is always more successful to cut them off at ground level in the winter. Growth will be back up to 6ft in a couple of years. Cutting back to standing trunks always

leads to further die-back later, and it is much safer to cut at ground level. Your holly is too young to be senescent. It may have been damaged to the trunk at high level, in which case cut off the trunk just below the damage and let it regrow. Or it may be a root problem such as waterlogging, which must be rectified by mechanical means.

Q I have had a hibiscus for several years but it will not flower. I have cut it back but not fed it too much. How do I get it to flower?

A The large-flowered *Hibiscus rosa-sinensis* is not hardy and cannot be stood outdoors in full sun. Your hibiscus is in need of more food and especially more light. Keep it on the dry side for the winter. Next spring, start a fortnightly programme of liquid feeding, and give it as much light as possible, in a conservatory or greenhouse. It should not go below 13°C. Pinch it back to keep it bushy, rather than cutting back every couple of years.

Q Readers should write to: Garden Answers, Weekend, The Times, 1 Pennington Street, London E1 9XN. It may not be possible to deal with every request. Advice is offered without legal responsibility. The Times also regrets that any enclosures cannot be returned.



Holly can be cut back

Jane Owen finds a low-maintenance garden with a lush English feel, yet it needs hardly any watering

Plants that look after themselves



Full of good ideas: Dominic Cole

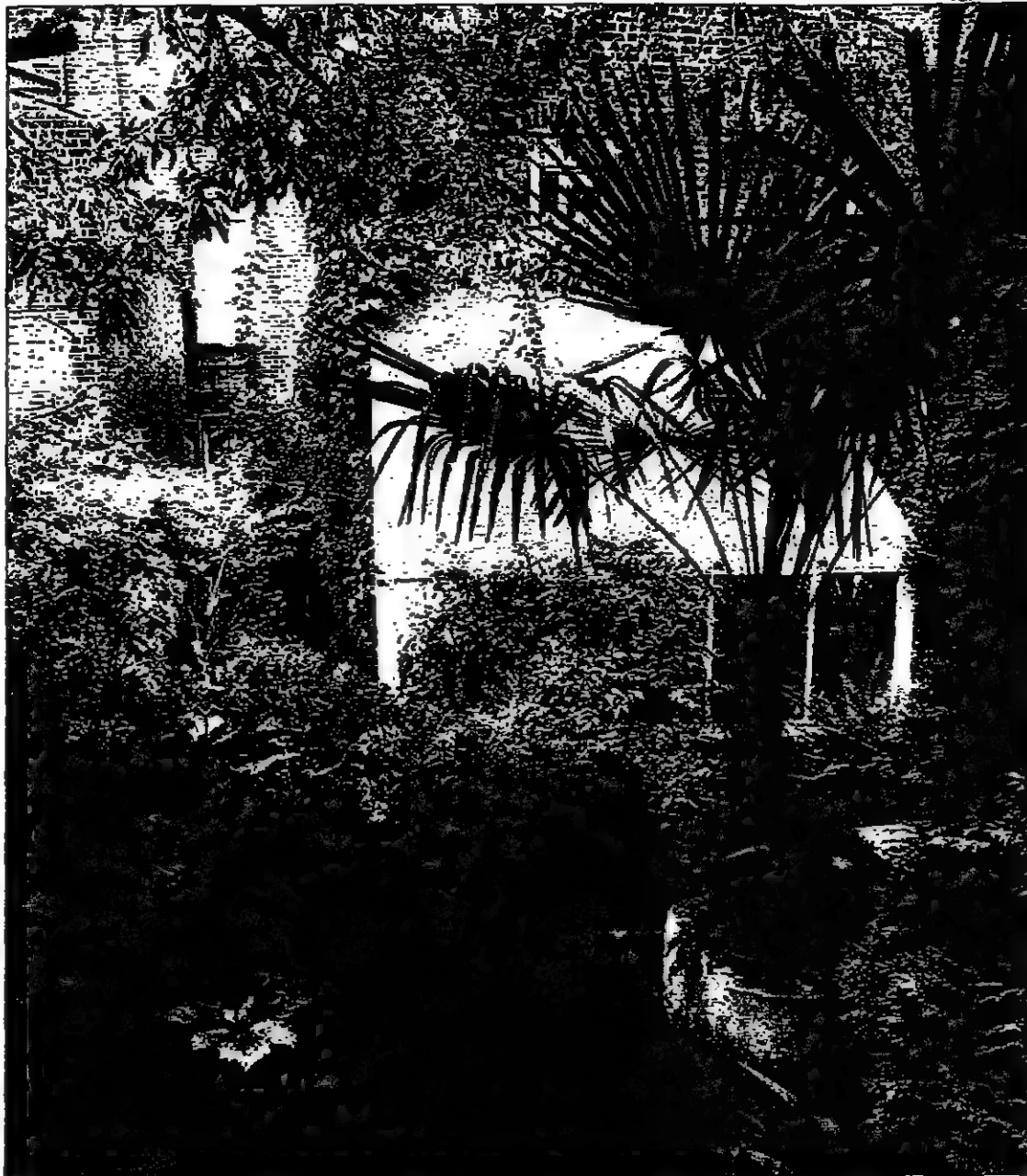
Dominic Cole watered his garden only once this year, and he reckons that was in a moment of foolhardy extravagance, because the garden is planted to look after itself. Half an hour's maintenance a week is about what it needs, and most of that time is spent lopping back certain plants to let others breathe and grow.

It is eight years since Mr Cole bought his flat in north London and its 70ft by 13ft garden, which was then mainly paved with concrete slabs with a rubbish heap at one end. The cost of the garden has been about £700. That includes rebuilding parts of his perimeter walls and adding trellis, with "gossip gaps" through which he can chat to his neighbours.

Low-maintenance gardens which require little or no watering usually have a Mediterranean feel created by drought-resistant architectural plants and weed-suppressing membrane concealed under pebbles or scree. This garden is quite different. During the spring and summer it has the feel of a lush English country garden, which is all the more surprising because it is squeezed between an early Victorian terrace of houses fronting on to an arterial route into London and the crescent that housed the murderous Dr Crippen.

After work and at weekends, Mr Cole took up a lot of the paving and sorted what was left into useful soil, genuine rubbish for the dump, and bricks and fragments of York stone pavers to make two terraces, one at the far end of the garden and one in the centre. This overlooked a small pond and bog garden that he dug and lined with heavy-grade polythene from a builders' merchant.

The bog garden was made by dropping a semi-circle of soil-filled terracotta pots into a corner of the

Dominic Cole's garden, with the impressive *Trachycarpus fortunei* palm in its chimney pot, right

pond and filling the remaining space in the corner with soil, meadow sweet, arum lilies and water buttercup. Frogs appeared of their own volition and, with them, water snails and water boatmen.

A chimney pot, rescued from the brink of destruction by enthusiastic builders, makes a home for an impressive palm, *Trachycarpus fortunei*, which is left out all winter.

"It doesn't like cold wind, so if one looks likely I tie the leaves together with rope. But I leave it to its own devices most winters," says Mr Cole, a landscape architect who works for a landscape restoration company.

At the far end of the garden, behind a shed, is the compost area. The active heap is topped by a once-fine Persian rug that had suffered moth attack. The compost is responsible for

Mr Cole's enviable watering record. He uses it as a mulch and as a terrific start when he plants roses and shrubs.

The structure of the garden comes from the shrubs: a standard holly grown from a 2in seedling, the exotic-looking blue-flowered *Abutilon vitifolium*, lavender, balls of box and an old apple tree. This is now weighed down with the pale pink, scented, early-flowering *Clematis armandii* 'Apple Blossom' and the montana 'Elizabeth', the conifer *Chamaecyparis 'Elwoodii'*, which is a pillar of evergreen, and a *Prunus subhirtella 'Autumnalis'*.

But the atmosphere of the garden comes from the riot of wild flowers, or flowers that happily self-seed: orange Welsh poppies; the 4ft high, gracefully arching grass *Carex pendula*;

exclamation marks of *Verbascum bombyciferum*, with its soft grey leaves and yellow flowers; the graceful white blooms of arum lilies, which will grow in dry as well as wet; and a gunnera, which is grown in the dry to keep it small. There is also lamium, hedgerow honeysuckle (the cultivated version of this is 'Graham Thomas'), scabious, hawthorn and herb robert, which sprout out of every crack in the mortar between the old paving and the rubble the wild flower seed in to get this effect.

In spring, the unusual *Libertia bioides* adds spikes of sizzling pink-like flowers to its fountain of leaves.

From inside Mr Cole's kitchen/dining room, a sort of conservatory makes the garden seem part of the house. Through a thicket of trifid-

WEEKEND TIPS

- Make 12in hardwood cuttings of roses, setting them two-thirds underground in a trench in a shady place. Transplant to their final positions next autumn.
- Ventilate greenhouses as much as outdoor temperatures will allow, to reduce the onset of fungal diseases.
- Prune gooseberries and black, red and white currants, according to their different requirements.
- Check over shears, lawnmowers and power equipment, and get any servicing done before the spring rush. Start up petrol engines periodically through the winter.
- Place seed orders—and resolve not to buy seed of vegetables which always crop just as you go away on your summer holiday.

like house plants the garden proper is visible: a cascade of grass-like leaves mark the place where, in spring, *Fris sylosa* produces its elegant little heads; a huge, red-flowered chaenopodium, cut back every August, flowers from Christmas for about two months.

In a space about 2ft wide along one side of the conservatory is an area most people would have ignored. Mr Cole, however, has managed to plant a voluptuous selection of ferns and ivy for year-round greenery, and Japanese anemones, which seed freely on London's heavy clay.

On the other side of the house, in a passage leading down to the French windows of the sitting room, is a marble stand on which Mr Cole does his cuttings. Beside it are pots of white-flowered nicotiana; the small, grey-leaved pelargonium 'Lady Penzance'; lily of the valley, mind-your-own-business and even a Christmas rose.

An intense, incense-like smell in this area came from the leaves of *Cistus ladanifer*. Alongside the pots, in a narrow bed with a meagre 2in of soil, the fern polypody thrives and, close by, the curious pink spikes of the saprophytic plant which grows on the roots of ivy stand to attention.

Like all dedicated gardeners, Mr Cole spends almost nothing on plants; they come as gifts or swaps. While it may not suit traditionalists and lovers of primped lawns and well-dug, weed-free beds, this style is a future for gardening: appropriate planting, nurturing plants that enjoy growing in a given spot instead of trying always to triumph over nature.

It manages to be an extremely English compromise for a very English garden.

■ Dominic Cole will sometimes show his garden to enthusiasts if they write to 42 Brecknock Road, London N7.

ACROSS

- 1 Sign about new pack offering individualised food (7)
- 5 Times is taken by English liberal, for instance (7)
- 9 Trivial demonstration taking everyone in (7)
- 15 Settle matters by going over the top and risk being hit by shell fragments (13,12,2,5,1,3)
- 16 No deposit can be returned, having accepted present at that point (9)
- 17 Get ready for brewing ale in advance (7)
- 18 Story of a bishop being eaten by aborigine? (9)
- 19 Always getting a century for northern eleven (7)
- 21 One who's achieved great success through skillful man-management (11)
- 23 Pashan giving Cockney difficult time (6)
- 24 Like extremely hellish region with man in terrible torments (10)
- 26 Place with female leader in Bible, at the end of Arabia (5)
- 28 A pest's destructively eating little plants in the garden (5,4)
- 31 Roak: no richer about on fruit tree (6)
- 33 Storm has disrupted a party (7)
- 35 Thrash beginning in evening, going on late (5)
- 37 Bank hasn't opened, in light of warning (5)
- 40 Worker is freedom fighter without a leader (7)
- 41 Warning, by the way, this figure's regularly around (11,8)
- 44 One who's contrived caring role re patient? (7,12)
- 46 Entourage gathering round Queen in the country (7)
- 49 Hair loss from anxiety initially (5)
- 49 Ruddy-brown monkeys about to grab one (5)
- 51 Shout from one fencing part of kitchen garden (2,5)
- 53 Friendly good companion joining mother after first male's gone (6)
- 54 Heating or cooling device (9)
- 57 Governor gets through printed document (5)
- 59 Firm line guy ordered to restrict noise (10)
- 62 Graze in furrow (6)
- 64 Firm to stop making tool component (8,3)
- 68 Seasoning something like a rabbit's taken about a month (7)
- 70 Once again pay attention to Sarah in run-through (9)
- 71 Enliven an initially indifferent companion (7)
- 73 Is it a chop that's destroyed this tree? (4)
- 75 Introducing a male division on account of a hard task? (7,3,3,3,4,3,4)
- 76 Absorb too much and get too hot (7)
- 77 Festival name appropriate to Asian lands (7)
- 78 Play about bit left out (7)

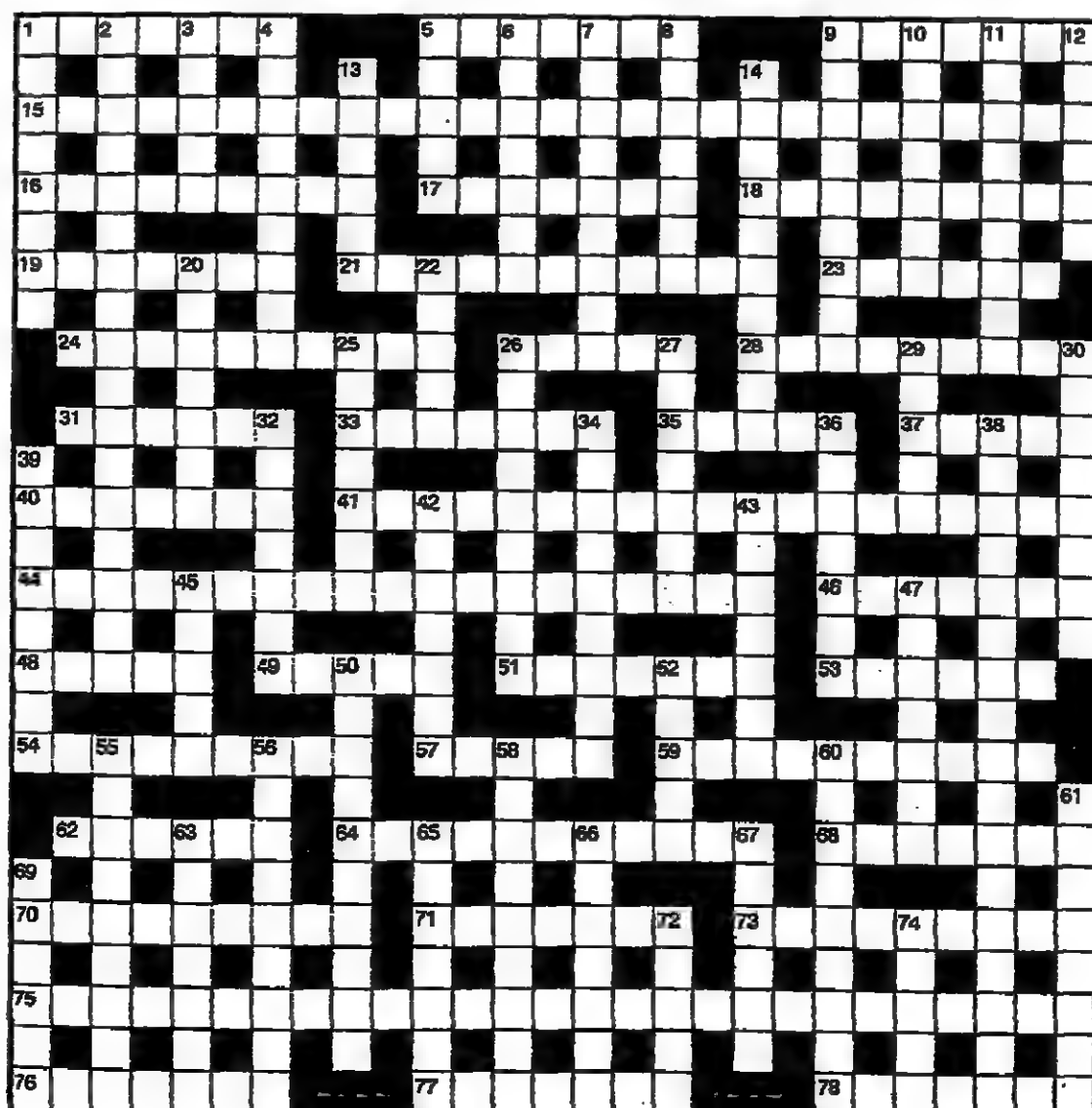
DOWN

- 1 One attached to circle, in short, associated with monarch (8)
- 2 The most noteworthy bit of Paris (5,2,10)
- 3 Man, perhaps, buried under a passage (5)
- 4 Surprise you once had in English sportsman coming in first (3-6)
- 5 See the rain — but with some clearance there's clear sky (5)
- 6 One can identify the captain in a jolly crew (7)
- 7 Assume head can absorb drink served up (9)
- 8 Heart, not head, involved in petition (7)
- 9 Right where you'll see famous actor carrying one item of luggage (9)
- 10 Bothersome power-cut in one part of town (7)
- 11 Number of degrees in Geography? Oxford has more than Cambridge (9)
- 12 Blight on the side of King Edward (6)
- 13 Say, what's for preprandial beating up? A concoction for drinking (6)
- 14 Actress in Shakespearean lead evicted those summarising plays (10)
- 15 Casual clothes, not suitable for dinner, we hear? (1-6)
- 22 Plant behind when deprived of nitrogen (5)
- 25 Section of spirit we arranged for exhaust (7)
- 26 Unimportant being second? (5-8)
- 27 Drug one racial brought up in a tin (7)
- 29 Crown one seized in place of Irish king (5)
- 30 Police officer pronounced an expert with baton (8)
- 32 Confuse leaders of nations plainly lacking in common sense (7)
- 34 Ship's beam inaccurate — needing precision, we hear (9)
- 36 Capricious fellow harbouring deserter (7)
- 38 Game fellow asking for aid — one I, by good Samaritan, should help (6,2,6)
- 39 Girl sees changing of the guard (8)
- 42 Release grip of snake after relative comes to premature end (7)
- 43 Crook nearly caught stealing (7)
- 45 One emperor upset follower of another (5)
- 47 Simply overestimate number in gathering (5-2)
- 50 Englishman gathers stray bullets after battle (4-6)
- 52 Journey from Waterloo, heading East (5)
- 56 Glommy hero's out to become unexpected success (4,5)
- 56 Carelessness in supervision (9)
- 58 Writer on river craft on the rocks (4)
- 60 Interpreter's English baffled six top soldiers (9)
- 61 First person in Lourdes to welcome a troubled soul, one blind (8)
- 63 Cupidity — a wicked habit for a king to get into (7)
- 65 Make one's home outside a US city (7)
- 66 With unequal sides ranking first and second in netball (7)
- 67 Arrange scheme to support the lower classes (8)
- 69 Speedy Lanes soccer team failing to finish (6)
- 72 Impish female talk into rising river (5)
- 74 Sailor takes each maiden across the ship (5)

NEW YEAR JUMBO CROSSWORD



Win a methuselah of Moët & Chandon champagne and £100 in our quiz. Five runners-up will receive £100. Entries, by January 13, to: New Year Jumbo Crossword, Weekend, The Times, 1 Pennington Street, London E1 9XN. Solution on January 18



NAME _____
ADDRESS _____
POSTCODE _____

Times Two New Year Holiday Crossword

There are no prizes for this crossword. The answers will be published on Monday, December 30

ACROSS

- 1 Polluter (7)
- 5 Surgeon's knife (7)
- 9 Setback (after recovery) (7)
- 15 All my nut-tree would bear (1,6,3,1,6,4)
- 16 Place for legal advice (3,6)
- 17 Pouched-beak bird (7)
- 18 Issuing (from) (9)
- 19 A substitute (5-2)
- 21 Evocative of the air (11)
- 23 Compression engine (4)
- 24 Reconsider (5,3)
- 26 Appears; appearance (5)
- 28 Great European painting (3,6)
- 31 Triumvirate (6)
- 33 Car frame (7)
- 35 Desert waterhole (5)
- 37 Swimming style; go slowly (5)
- 40 Hitter; one not working (7)
- 41 As it were (2,1,6,2,8)
- 44 Naval rank (10,9)
- 46 Ointment (7)
- 48 Sorted reference list (5)
- 49 Take-away (sign) (5)
- 51 Fragment (7)
- 53 Too thin (person) (6)
- 54 Thick round fillet cut (9)
- 57 Right-hand (page) (5)
- 59 Resistance (10)
- 60 Lowest parts (6)
- 64 Circumlocution (11)
- 68 Shorten (text) (7)
- 70 Loudening device (9)
- 71 Went round the edges of (7)
- 73 One growing in orchard (5,4)
- 75 'I met —' (Ozymandias) (1,9,4,2,7,4)
- 76 Final consumer (5,4)
- 77 Portable light (7)
- 78 Disaggregated (7)

DOWN

- 1 A write-off (4,4)
- 2 One unhelpful in trouble (4-7,6)
- 3 Embankment; royal reception (5)
- 4 Zenda country (Hope) (9)
- 5 (Judge) summarise (3,2)
- 6 Prayer bell (7)
- 7 Wooden puppet, Disney film (9)
- 8 Student (7)
- 9 (Caught) in the act (3-6)
- 10 Pedigree (7)
- 11 Head of republic (9)
- 12 Anger very much (6)
- 13 Got it (Archimedes) (6)
- 14 Chance on; be understood (4,6)
- 20 1940 evacuation port (7)
- 22 A craze (5)
- 25 Sell to highest bidder (7)
- 26 Grand Canary port (3,6)
- 27 Searched hard; rubbed (7)
- 29 Ghana capital (5)
- 32 Word formed of initials (7)
- 34 Smallest Europe republic (3,6)
- 36 Wren's cathedral (2,5)
- 38 Fantastical (after Carroll) (5-2,10)
- 39 King David, as author (8)
- 42 One bringing charges (7)
- 43 First-mast platform (naut.) (7)
- 45 One from Dallas (5)
- 47 Glamour, sparkle (7)
- 50 Bushy (4,6)
- 52 Devout (5)
- 55 Still valid (9)
- 56 Whisky manufacturer (9)
- 58 Goat star-sign (9)
- 60 Current situation (6,3)
- 61 Protected (8)
- 63 Robbers (7)
- 65 Calming (7)
- 66 The daily struggle (3,4)
- 67 Freedom from danger (6)
- 69 Royal residence (6)
- 72 Exhaust; outflow pipe (5)
- 74 Subject, motif (5)

Yes. we grow some banana



Yes, we grow some bananas

Climatic changes and new food fashions are starting to affect the fruit and vegetables we grow

Back in October I walked out into my garden in Hertfordshire and picked the last of the peaches from the tree by the toolshed to have with breakfast. The fruit was fully ripe and lusciously sweet — in no way different from one grown in an orchard a thousand miles further south.

In Norfolk — a county not noted for the mildness of its climate and whose people boast that nothing much in the way of hills stands between them and Siberia — there is a man with a banana tree flourishing in his border.

What does this mean? Does the survival of a plant species growing outdoors in Britain that would usually be more at home in the South of France — or even the tropics — mean any more than that the gardener concerned is unusually skilled, or lucky? After all, for centuries no English country house has been complete without its orangery, and Victorian hostesses delighted in producing exotic fruits from their hothouses in midwinter.

According to the experts — climatologists, ecologists and plant breeders — the answer is: yes, there is a gradual climatic change under way and this is reflected in the plants of our countryside and in the crops we grow.

One such expert is David Jeffery, of Unwin's seeds, Histon, near Cambridge. When Mr Jeffery gazed out on the Royal Horticultural Society's vegetable gardens at Wisley, Surrey, at the start of his career, he was looking at the same plants being grown in the same way that his grandfather would have recognised.

Now, 40 years or so later, he is witnessing a gradual revolution which will mean a transformation of our horticultural landscape. Many of the varieties that have fed us for centuries are already disappearing in southern areas of Britain, partly through a change in taste and eating habits, but also as a result of the changing weather.

Where once vegetable gardens in southern counties were filled with cabbages and cauliflowers, which will struggle in increasingly extreme conditions, there will be melons and exotic, multicoloured American squashes. The standard green-leaved British lettuces we have known for generations are being replaced by heat-tolerant varieties varying in colour from pale pink to the richest purple. And the coarse, foot-long carrots that the British love to within an inch of their lives will have given way to quick-growing miniature varieties which achieve full flavour by the time they are only a couple of inches long.

In early autumn, gardeners in the North will no longer be forced to choose between consigning their frostbitten out-

door tomato plants and their bitter green fruit to the compost heap or making even more jars of inedible chutney. Every year, they can expect a crop of massive, flavour-packed Mediterranean varieties (not to be confused with the so-called "beefsteaks" force-grown under glass in Holland and imported to disgrace British supermarket shelves).

Some types — the product of genetic engineering — will stay ripe on the vine for weeks; an obvious benefit to the commercial grower, but also a boon to gardeners in the more favoured South, who will no longer be faced with a three-week diet of ratatouille and tomato sandwiches as they live out the annual glut.

Mr Jeffery says: "Many of the vegetables we have traditionally grown in the south of England are likely to disappear in time. Crops such as the various brassicas and peas are particularly hard hit by drought. At the same time as the plants are being starved of moisture, increasing atmospheric poisons will make them weak and prone to pests and disease."

And he adds: "These plants are likely to be grown commercially a lot further north — possibly in Scotland. And this will be reflected in gardening practice, because the seeds available to the amateur grower are mostly determined by what has been developed for the commercial market."

"Sprouts, in particular, are likely to continue to decline. They are rapidly becoming just a Christmas crop, in the supermarkets anyway, as tastes change. Young people today don't want to eat them," Mr Jeffery says.

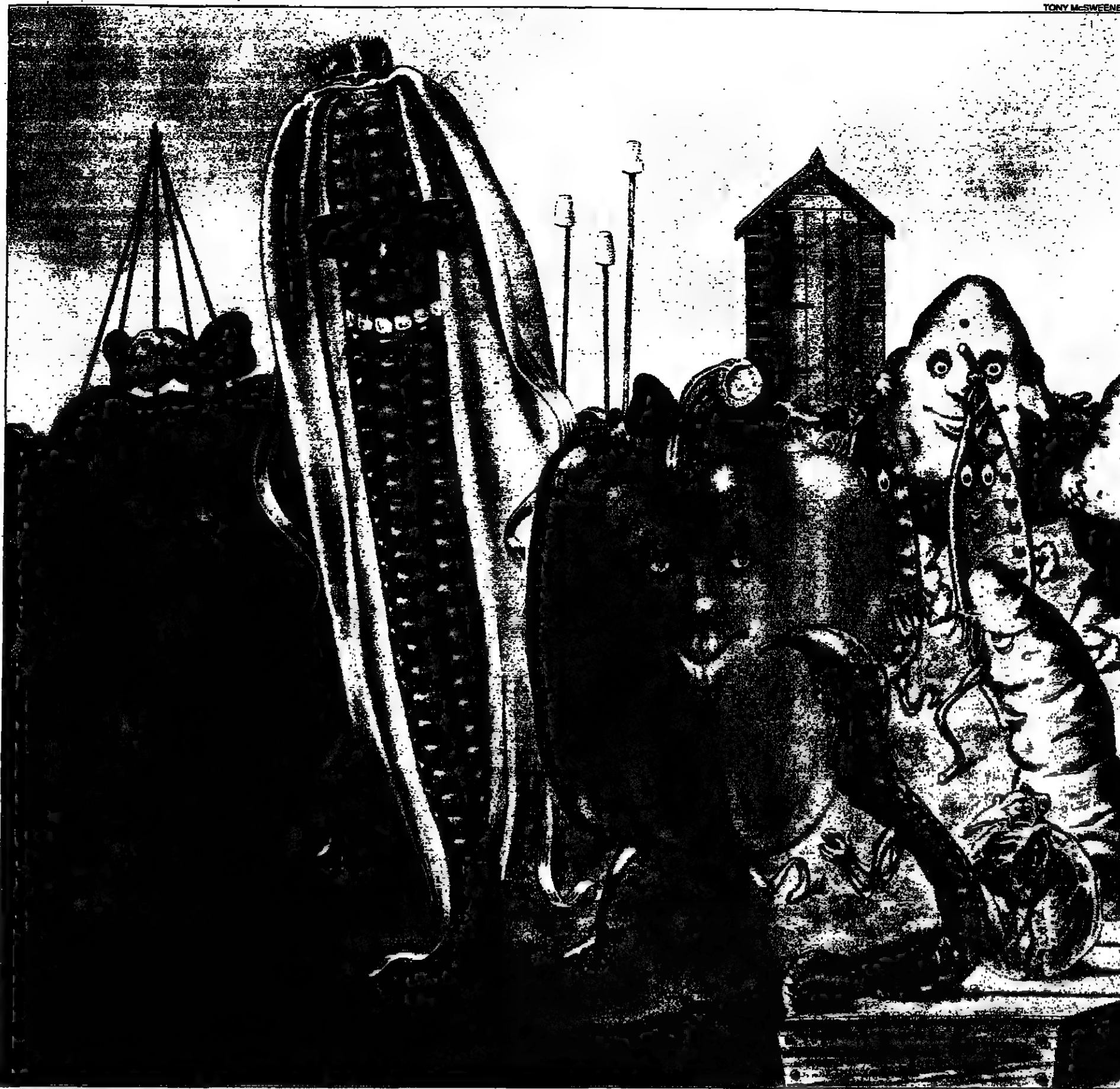
The number may also be up for that old standby of the amateur gardener, the scarlet runner. Even in the most favourable seasons, a row of these thirsty beasts can consume gallons of water every day.

I have already switched away from runners in my own garden towards bean varieties better able to cope with dry weather and less likely to produce Popeye-like forearms in the unfortunate gardener who has been obliged to spend all summer curbing buckets of water down the garden to slake their endless appetite for moisture.

I grew white-flowered American climbing beans in my garden last season, as well as the better-known dwarf Purple Queen (a waxy, near-black variety that turns green on cooking) and pencil-thin Kenya beans.

It is not only the runners' insatiable thirst that makes them too demanding, they already find themselves under threat from a change in farming practice.

"The growing of oil-seed rape is making runners difficult as a crop in some areas," Mr Jeffery says.



VEG BOX

Changes in taste and climate could mean:

IN

Outdoor cherry tomatoes, peppers, orange touts, French beans, pink fir apple potatoes, spinach, sweetcorn, celeriac, fast-growing baby varieties of carrot, lettuce.

OUT

Sprouts, cabbage, runner beans, turnips, swedes, parsnips, rhubarb.

providing a gentler, more palatable food oil than rape.

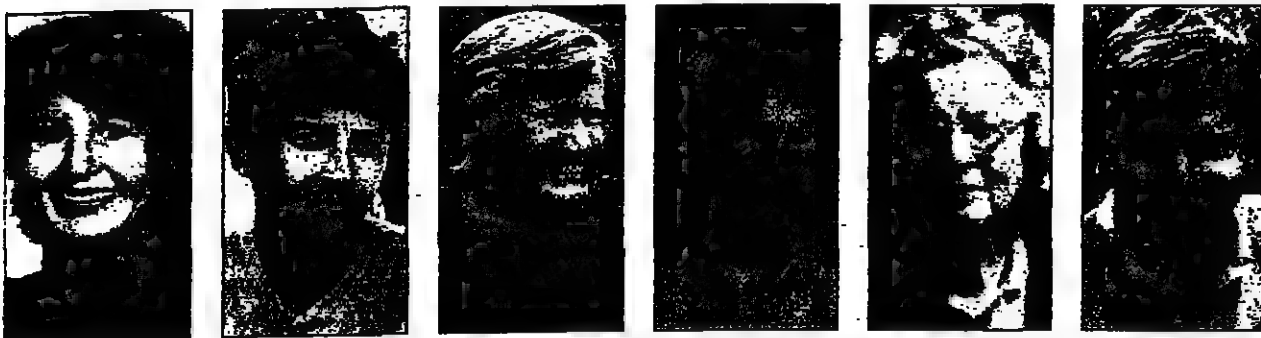
A report requested earlier this year by the Department of the Environment from the Climate Change Impacts Review Group to John Gummer, the Environment Secretary, warned that life in Britain would probably alter dramatically in the next half-century as the average temperature increases by 1.6°C.

At the Imperial College's Silwood Campus in Berkshire, Dr Hefin Jones, an ecologist and research fellow, echoes the warning, but he cautions: "Although there is now enough research data available to leave no doubt of the change, the difficulty is in making accurate predictions."

The answer to our future may well come eventually from the Silwood Campus. There, in a series of sealed cabinets which make up an experiment called the Ecotron, miniature worlds have been created where the climate can be controlled at the touch of a button. Within the cabinets, plants and insects are being observed to see how they react to the conditions we may ourselves have to face. But we will have to be as patient as gardeners before we know the facts — the first results are not to be published until July 1997.

DAVID BLUNDELL

The experts shed their secrets



From left to right: Rosie Atkins, Dan Pearson, Penelope Hobhouse, Nigel Colborn, Rosemary Verey, Stephen Anderton

LOCK UP the garden shed and ask a gardener which chemical or substance he or she would most miss? *The Times* asked six eminent gardeners which things they find endlessly useful and recommend.

Rosie Atkins, award-winning editor of *Gardens Illustrated*:

"I've never really used chemicals much, but I did use the fungicide Benlate before it was discontinued — and now manage quite well without it. I don't grow plants which struggle to survive; they have to take their chance with me. I keep meaning to try Epsom salts."

Dan Pearson, designer, broadcaster and *The Sunday Times* gardener:

"Roundup, which contains glyphosate, is invaluable as a safe and reliable

weedkiller. Used appropriately, it is the shortcut to a clean start where perennial pernicious weeds abound."

Penelope Hobhouse, author, designer and gardener:

"I still like to use Chestnut Compound watered on to my trays of seedlings, to stop them developing moulds and damping off. It has been around for a long time but it works well."

Nigel Colborn, BBC *Gardeners' Question Time* panellist, and novelist:

"Roseclear, a combined insecticide and fungicide manufactured by Miracle, was capriciously banned this year by the Ministry of Agriculture on the flimsiest of evidence. I want it back, and so does the rest of the gardening public."

Rosemary Verey, author, journalist and broadcaster:

"Dear old Jeyes Fluid for me. We use it every year to sterilise the greenhouse floors, and it seemed — much wood — to keep a recurrence of honey fungus at bay when it killed one of the limes on our lime walk years ago."

And, finally, for myself...

"It would have to be a choice between rooting hormone powder and the weedkiller glyphosate. I could do without all the insecticides and fungicides, but for difficult weeds I would hate to be without glyphosate. As chemicals go, it's relatively harmless, too."

STEPHEN ANDERTON

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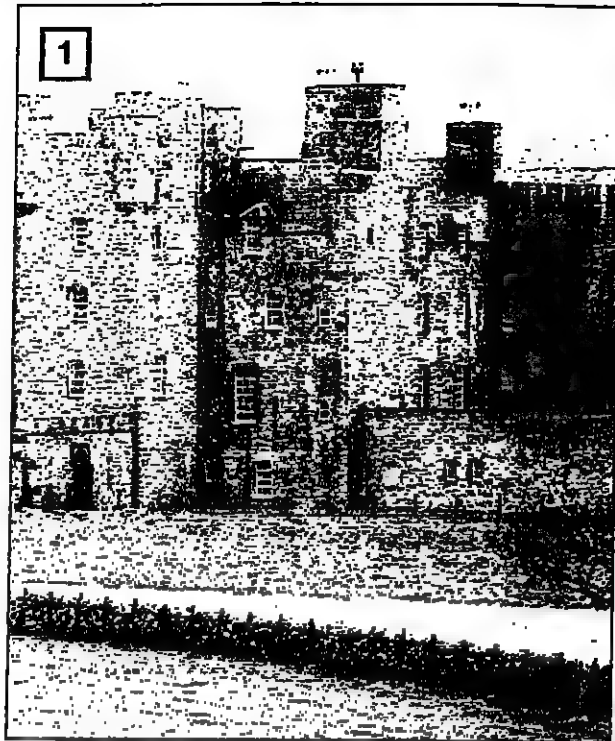
Put the people and places to the property in our new year quiz and you could win a stay at a health resort

QA

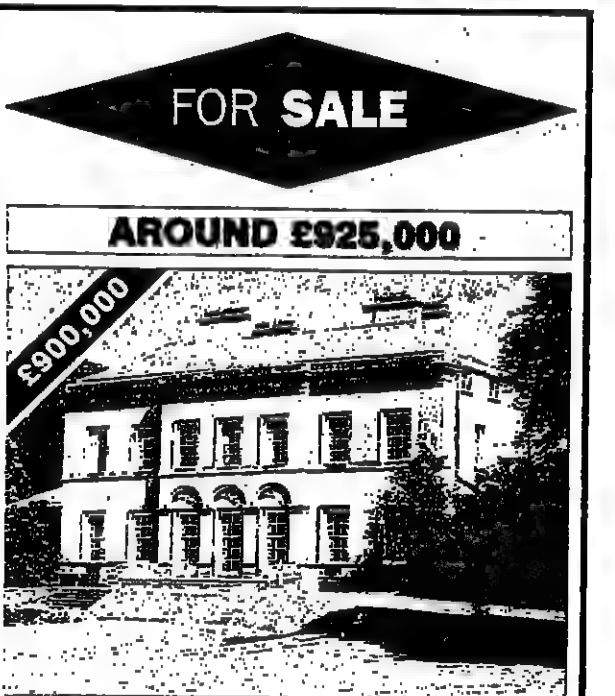
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

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THE PHOTOGRAPHS numbered 1 to 8 illustrate property stories that have been in the news in 1996. The object of the quiz is to guess the person or place each photograph relates to, using the clues (see right).
The reader with the correct answers selected from the postbag on January 3, 1997, will win an all-inclusive two-night stay at Champneys health resort in Tring, Hertfordshire, worth up to £600. The "New Year, New You" package can be taken at any time until February 28, 1997 (subject to availability). Normal Times competition rules apply. Send your entries to Property Quiz, Weekend, The Times, 1 Pennington Street, London E1 9XN. Solution on January 11. CHERYL TAYLOR



IRELAND:
Ardriscan, Navan, Co. Meath. 18th-century Palladian mansion in 120 acres of parkland. Eight bedrooms, six bathrooms (three en suite), day and night nurseries, four reception rooms, study, kitchen, domestic offices and staff flat. East Pavilion with four rooms. West Pavilion: self-contained four-bedroom staff/guest accommodation. Entrance lodge and farm buildings. About £900,000 (Hamilton Osborne King, 00 35 31 6760251).



HAMPSHIRE:
Home Lodge, Chalkerton. Grade II listed 18th-century country house on eight acres of formal gardens, walled kitchen garden, woods and paddocks. Six bedrooms, four bathrooms (two en suite), galleried hall, three reception rooms, library, kitchen/breakfast room and domestic offices. Swimming pool, tennis courts. About £250,000 (Knight Frank, 01488 682729).



CASA BERTI,
Gugliano, Lucca, Tuscany. Restored country house in 17 acres of woodland and olive groves, in the hills above Lucca. Five bedrooms, four bathrooms (one en suite), sitting room, drawing room, dining room/billiard room, kitchen/breakfast room. Farmhouse providing staff and guest accommodation. Studio, swimming pool, chapel and terraced gardens. About £330,000 (Knight Frank 0171-629 8171).

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2



8



QUIZ CLUES

- 1 This much loved grandmother saved the castle for charity.
- 2 Which Essex girl was fined for changing her historic home?
- 3 Unlikely terrorist target in the first division.
- 4 This man's house of horror is wiped off the map.
- 5 Fitz "double" troubled by builders' rubble on Channel Island hideaway.
- 6 Sly intruder puts one's wildlife in a flap at this residence.
- 7 This star-crossed couple play a game of musical houses.
- 8 The new watering hole for this raucous popular.

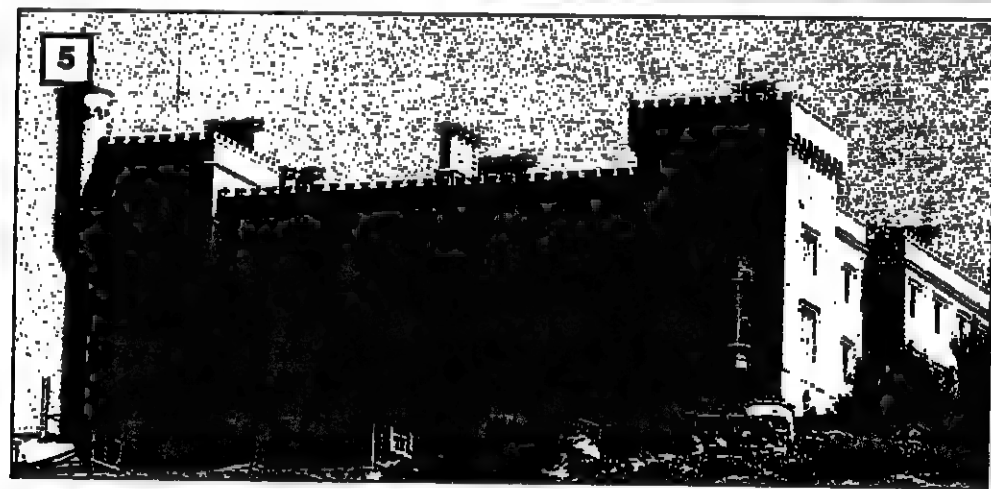
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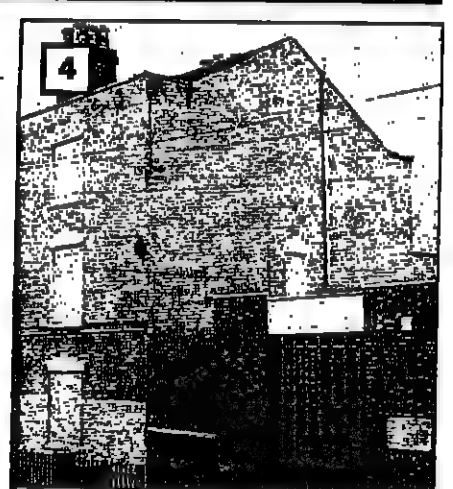
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5



4



Create a cracking good design

Louisa Young

explains how a few pieces of broken tile can be turned into a beautiful mosaic

Mosaic is easy. I do it with my three-year-old, and her efforts are generally better than mine. Like cooking, it is easier to learn by watching and doing than by following a recipe. However, because the cost of equipment can add up, and because you may be unsure whether you will take to it, a good way to start is to take an evening class. Then, if you get the mosaic buzz, you can buy all the things you will need, including *The Mosaic Book* by Peggy Vance and Celia Goodrick-Clarke (Conran, October, £16.99), which gives step-by-step instructions, design ideas and plenty of inspiration.

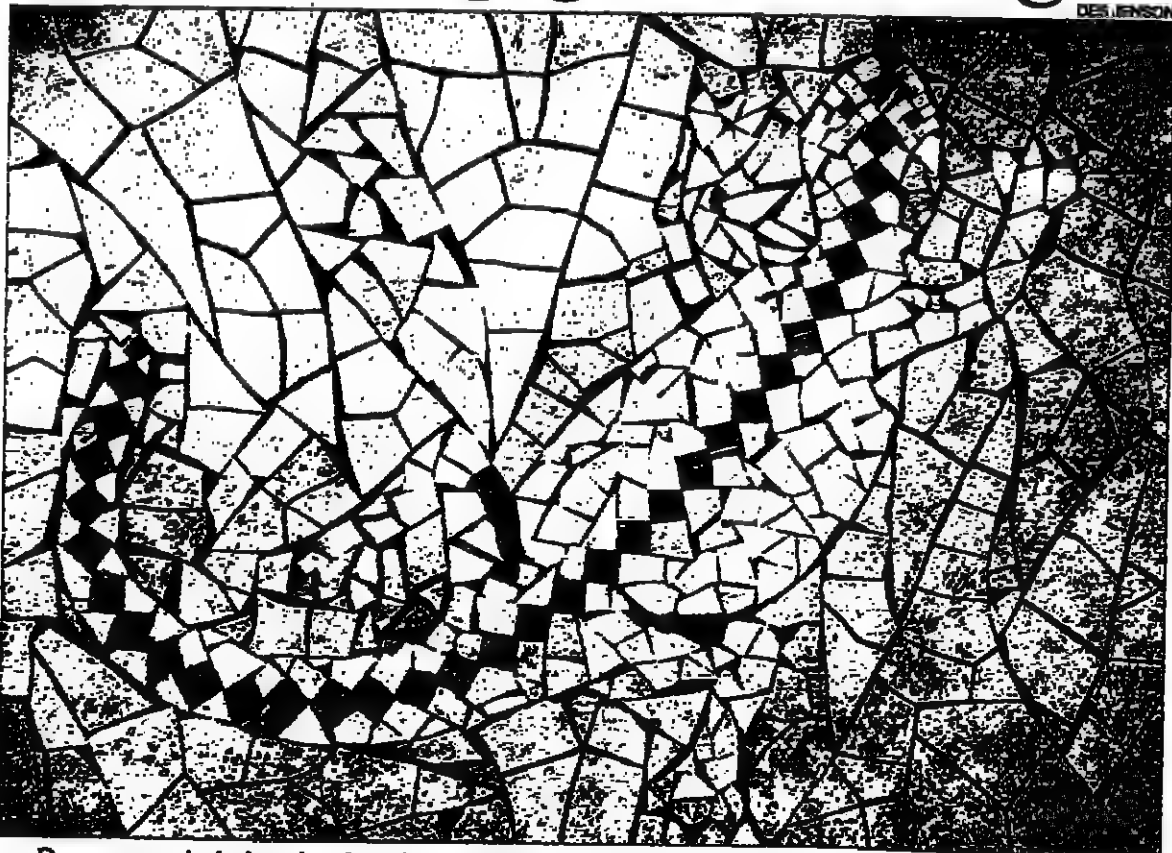
The simplest mosaic method is to spread grout all over a base and then push broken crockery into it. But if you want a more professional finish, try the indirect method. It is called indirect because you create the design upside-down on paper, to get a smooth surface, then spend it onto its base.

Let's start with a tile (later you can work up to fireplace surrounds, bathroom floors and grottos).

You will need:

- Mosaic tiles
- Grout (Unibond all-purpose waterproof is good)
- Brown paper
- Stanley knife
- Small flexible grout knife
- Paper gum
- Two pieces of hardboard: one of them the size you want your mosaic to be (you could also use an old tile, if you want your item to be waterproof); one rather larger
- Masking tape
- Water and sponge
- Lint-free cloth (a bit of old sheet is good)

Dampen the brown paper slightly and tape it firmly (tape along all the edges) to the larger board. Stretch it as you



Dragon mosaic designed and made by the author's neighbours, Candida Blaker and Stephen Clarke

tape it. When it is dry, sketch your design in pencil. Remember that it will come out reversed, so if you are doing a number or writing, do it backwards. It is probably best to start with something small and simple, say a star or a geometric design. A mirror in a mosaic frame is effective; if you want to do this, gum the mirror face down in position before starting the mosaic. Your local glass cutter will snip you a piece of mirror to size.

Next choose your colours. Gum the paper for the section of design that you are working on, and stick the tiles smooth side down (one side is ridged; that side should be up) on to the paper. Clip the little glass tiles (tesserae) into shape as you wish. You need put only the edge of the tile into the clippers; it will snap. The closer you fit the tiles together, the more professional the result. Use the tiles' own straight edges

for the edge of your design. Remember that the cut edges can be sharp.

When your design is done, let it dry. Then take the other piece of board (or tile) and make sure that it fits fairly accurately over your design. Apply a layer of grout about 1cm thick all over it, and score it with the grout knife. Do this gently, and make sure it is positioned correctly before you press — there's no going back at this stage.

Then put another board, some heavy books and/or weights on top, and leave for 24 hours. The next day, take off the weights and take down your mosaic. The tiles should be stuck firmly into the grout, and the brown paper should come away from the board with them. Use water and a sponge to soak the brown paper off the tiles. Be very careful. A few tiles may remain attached to the paper, so ease

them gently and take your time. If the tiles come off, you can glue them back into position. This is the crunch moment: not only do you find out if your design for the first time.

If the mosaic seems firm, take your grouting knife and remove any extra-grout. Then, with the knife (or your fingers) fill in any gaps between the tiles and tidy up the edges. Leave to dry for a couple of hours, then wipe over with a damp cloth. You may have to scrub, or even use the knife, depending on how much excess grout there is. A film of grout will make the tiles dull, so be careful.

When everything is tidy and beautiful, let it dry for 24 hours, and polish off with a dry cloth. Then put it on your kitchen table, make yourself a congratulatory pot of tea and you'll have a colourful mat on which to put it.

PROPERTY NEWS

THE housing market is ending the year on a high note, according to the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors. Optimism has not been dampened by an interest rate rise, with 44 per cent of surveyors nationwide reporting price increases in November.

THE market has surpassed all expectations in 1996, according to agents Knight Frank, with a rise of 17.6 per cent in the prime London residential index since November 1995. Country houses have increased by 5 to 10 per cent.

THIS year will be remembered as the one people came out to look for property, say the Blackhorse agencies, with 29 per cent more people registering in the South to buy houses than last year, while viewings in the North East have increased by 20 per cent.

THE market has not stopped this autumn, says agent Strutt & Parker, which has sold almost 25 per cent more properties to the end of November 1996, compared with the same time last year.

PRIME central London agents have had a good year. De Groot Collis says 25 per cent of prime central London property sold within three months of coming onto the market, while Friend & Falcke records a rise of 10 per cent in the rentals market.

AMANDA LOOSE

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It's a dog's life in the cargo hold

Flying a pet abroad is costly and can be complicated if you don't have the know-how

Sky-high costs for transporting pets by air pose a stern test of any owner's loyalty. To fly an elderly retriever to New Zealand is costing one family £1,400, while the airline's standard one-way adult economy fare is about £1,000. There are no bucket-shop deals. Apex arrangements for animals and no reduced fares for under-age puppies or kittens.

On learning the likely bill for air-freighting an animal, many owners offer to pay for an extra seat and let their pet sit beside them on the flight, says Beryl Bromage, a partner in Worldwide Animal Travel. But this is not permitted.

Held 5, the aircraft's heated and pressurised freight section near the tail, where animals are accommodated, is the dearest space on the plane, she says. Cargo costs are determined by the overall volume of containers. "You can't pack animals as you pack cargo, so you are paying for the air around them."

A travel agency for animals conjures up fanciful pictures of French poodles popping over to Paris for a weekend break or Siamese cats returning to their roots. In fact, most animals Mrs Bromage deals with belong to owners who are emigrating or moving to an overseas post.

Cats and letters, often bearing paw-prints, attest to satisfied customers, including hamsters, rabbits, tortoises, terrapins and parrots.

New Zealand, Australia and Canada are favourite destinations, with a new surge to South Africa.

Pet owners can make their own arrangements but the paperwork represents a minefield for the unwary. Regulations vary from country to country. While some require only a health certificate, others demand proof that the country of origin is disease-free. New Zealand insists on rabies jabs and fleas specimens, while Australia imposes a quarantine period and demands identification computer chips.

In addition to arranging documentation, Mrs Bromage and her partner, Linda Hardwick, commission the construction of containers tailored to the animals' statistics. Regulations state that containers have to be twice as broad as the occupant and 4in longer. Older dogs, with middle-aged spreads, need more space to allow them to move and lie in comfort. Official inspections are made at the airport.

Usually, containers are made of wood, but when a Bristol dog bound for Cape Town ate the side of his box before reaching Heathrow, he had to be accommodated in a plastic alternative. Boxes have wire mesh at each end, to allow the animals to see out, and air holes in the sides.

While Americans dispense tranquillisers liberally, Mrs Bromage's company does not, unless specifically advised by a vet. Safer and more effective, she believes, is the presence in a box of some memento



All boxed up and ready for take-off for a new life: a dog takes a last sniff of fresh air at the airport before being loaded into the heated and pressurised hold of an aircraft

with a familiar smell from the pet's home. The interior of one dog's box was papered with drawings by his young owner, although whether this was for the peace of mind of the pet or the boy was not clear.

When owners receive a container before a flight, they are recommended to leave it around the house with its door open for a couple of days to allow the pet to become accustomed to it. A tasty morsel left inside can encourage a pet to investigate.

Mrs Bromage and Miss Hardwick operate a collection service from anywhere in the country, though clients often find it less expensive to meet them at a convenient rendezvous. Based in Brentwood, Essex, a couple of minutes from the M25, the women offer complete handovers at motorway service stations. Home calls can involve coaxing reluctant cats from trees and rescuing errant hamsters from beneath floorboards.

Most owners are anxious that their animals might soil the containers. "Providing you are sensible about feeding, they will not," Mrs Bromage says. On the day before

flying, pets should have a light meal — chicken for dogs and fish for cats. She tells of an English bull terrier that remained clean and dry not only throughout the 24-hour journey from Australia to Britain, but during

the subsequent road journey to quarantine kennels at Crewe in Cheshire. "But," she says, "when he emerged from his travelling box he was just wet and wet."

Airport check-in time for pets is earlier than for humans. They have to be sealed in their containers four hours before take-off. Heathrow and Gatwick have designated animal rooms, where containers are checked and measured and where veterinary examinations take place.

Not all airlines accept animals. American-bound passengers who choose to fly Virgin, for instance, have to send their pets with another airline. With 40 years' experience in the business between them, Mrs Bromage and Miss Hardwick agree that pets usually make better travellers than their owners. Animals the two women meet at airports invariably arrive brightly-eyed and bushy-tailed, even after 30 hours sealed in a box.

It might have something to do with missing the in-flight movies.

ALAN ROAD

FACT FILE

ANIMAL overseas travel specialists include:

■ Worldwide Animal Travel, 43 London Road, Brentwood, Essex CM14 4MN (01277 231611).

■ Pinhawk Kennels, Church Road, Carlton, Newmarket, Suffolk CB8 9LA (01223 290778).

■ Overhill Kennels, Norton Lane, Norton Malware, Pembrokeshire, SA18 4EY (01275 832499).

■ Pets Travel Service, 168 Appin Crescent, Dunfermline KY12 7TX (01383 722818).



Bambi, a non-racing greyhound, needs a home with children

ADOPT ME

BAMBI is a fawn-coloured greyhound who arrived at the animal centre three months ago. He was not a racing greyhound and would make an excellent pet for a family with children, but he does not get on with other dogs or cats.

If you are interested in Bambi, contact RSPCA Millbrook Animal Centre, Chobham, Surrey (01276 858792).

A VET WRITES

Q I am told I should worm my dog regularly and that I am an irresponsible owner if I don't. Is it necessary? He is five, fit as a fiddle and I have never seen any sign of worms. Wouldn't it be better to examine a sample before pushing worming tablets down his throat?

A Responsible owners worm adult dogs at least every six months, and puppies and breeding bitches more often — for human, rather than animal, health reasons. Larvae of toxocara, the dog roundworm, occur in parks fouled by dogs. These larvae can be picked up by a child playing on the grass. In most cases no harm results, but if a larva develops and migrates it can reach the back of the child's eye and damage the sight, sometimes permanently. This happens to about 50 children a year. If we all wormed our dogs regularly, toxocara damage would never happen.

Finding out first by sampling sounds a better idea than it is. If worm eggs are present, the dog has got worms, but a negative sample simply means they were not in that sample. Tomorrow's sample could be positive. If the dog has immature worms, they will not be laying eggs today, but they will before long.

Worm doses are safe, effective and inexpensive. Sampling first takes longer, costs more and is not so certain.

For a free leaflet, send an SAE to the Pet Health Council, Thistlewood Cottage, 49 Main Street, Sewstern, Lincolnshire NG33 5RF.

Q My budgie, Bert, is nearly two and his beak has never been trimmed. How often should this be done and how can I tell if it is necessary?

A If Bert's upper and lower beaks are correctly aligned, it is unlikely they will ever need cutting. Troubles arise when one beak overlaps the other. Because the beaks do not meet correctly, one overgrows and, in extreme cases, a bird cannot eat properly and may starve. These deformities are inherited and should always be looked for when buying a budgie.

Q I have heard that liver is bad for cats. Is this true? My black cat, Solomon, prefers it to anything else.

A Raw liver contains large quantities of vitamin A, and it is possible to have too much of a good thing. Excessive amounts of this vitamin cause abnormal changes in a cat's spine, especially in the neck. They are in pain, cannot twist their necks, so stop grooming themselves and, in extreme cases, have difficulty in walking. Be firm with Solomon. No liver until he has eaten the proper food. Then give him a cubic inch piece of liver. And no more.

JAMES ALLCOCK

● Readers should write to The Times Vet, Weekend, The Times, 1 Pennington Street, London E1 9XN. Advice is offered without legal responsibility.

Space helmet of youth

ALTERNATIVELY SPEAKING

TAMARA VORONINA could hail from a James Bond movie. Blonde, powerful, tall, she talks in heavily accented English that leaves out words and pronounces "then" as "ven". So she promised that if I followed her prescriptions, "ven you feel much better".

Dr Voronina is a Ukrainian endocrinologist who, for the past four years, has practised acupuncture and reflexology in London and is now at Kensington's carefully Feng-shui-filtered Good Health Clinic. There I found myself filling in the usual forms, marking my symptoms, before an hour-long session of "mountain air training" with Dr Voronina. The treatment promises "super-performance, staying young and rejuvenation" by breathing purified air which simulates that found at 5,800 metres (about 19,000ft).

Lead me to it. After a surfeit of Christmas parties I could do with some rejuvenation. And how, said Dr Voronina. Unlike most of my other therapists, she does not mince words. "You not in perfect health," she said after my first go on the exercise machine: my pulse had risen from 90 to 96.

Basically I had a busy pulse and lowish blood pressure. My high pulse showed I was working too hard to pump blood to all my organs, though it may just have been the after-effects of my rush to get to the clinic on time.

Nor did I excel on seeing for how long I could hold my breath. I managed a paltry 12 seconds — 30 to 40 is average for the healthy.

After seating me in an armchair, Dr Voronina placed a see-through space helmet over my head. Plastic tubes delivered "mountain air" from a large, dial-covered metal box, reinforcing the Bond-like sensation. I spent five minutes under the helmet. The theory is the opposite to what you might believe: a surfeit of oxygen actually ages the skin, Dr Voronina said. (Michael Jackson was wrong to sleep inside an oxygen chamber.) The magic treatment is to reduce the amount of oxygen. Via the helmet, the oxygen content of the filtered air is cut to 10 per cent compared with the 21 per cent we normally breathe.

"Too much oxygen poisons," Dr Voronina said. "Oxygen increases the free radicals in your body and reduces blood supply. And those free radicals are the baddies which cause

ageing by attacking our body's cells and making us look wrinkly.

So breathing less oxygen is good. It encourages the body to produce more haemoglobin, which carries the oxygen around the body. It makes the blood vessels open, allowing more blood to reach the tissues and triggers the body's own antioxidant defences.

A second test showed my blood pressure was up and the pulse down. My heart was now working less hard to pump blood around and was now able to send blood to deep tissues where the capillaries had dilated after treatment.

My cheeks flushed, my breathing eased and I felt deeply relaxed. Moreover, I could now hold my breath for 20 seconds, which showed that my organs had ceased to strain so much.

The problem was that my system could not take any more on that first session, Dr Voronina said. Ideally I should return every day for the next week. And the best results would come from repeating the treatment every day for ten to 15 days.

I HAVE yet to manage to go back to the clinic, much as I enjoyed my "mountain air" session, and I cannot vouch for its longer-term effects. But I was touched that Dr Voronina should later bother to phone me to encourage a return visit.

The "mountain air" treatment has yet to be clinically tested in Britain, but is widely used in Russia. It was developed by Professor Nikolay Agadjanian to counteract the accelerated ageing suffered by cosmonauts on their journey into space and is used by the Russian Olympic team, especially the cyclists.

But I did take away other tips from Dr Voronina — culled from all her other areas of expertise — which are more practical to implement at home. To wit, her belief in holistic medicine; and "must always treat the patient as a whole" meant she prescribed vitamin supplements especially vitamin E, B6, folic acid, and breathing exercises to counter stress which would all contribute more conventionally to that promised rejuvenation.

If Dr Voronina's own glamorous youthfulness and vitality are any test, she could be right. ● Good Health Clinic, 182-186 Kensington Church Street, London W8 4DP (0171-221 2260)



A client undergoes rejuvenating "mountain air" treatment at the Good Health Clinic

'Mountain air' treatment

■ What it is: by breathing "mountain air" through a see-through space helmet you feel rejuvenated and relaxed.

■ Disadvantages: you need to attend ten sessions for full benefit.

■ Cost: first consultation, including homeopathy and one session on the machine, £75, then £20 a session.

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Have an uplifting New Year.

The 25 Penn likely to DO

The turkeys may be beyond help, but why should all those lovely feathers be going to waste?

Let's go to heaven in a feather bed

It is too late now to worry about turkeys. Let us hope that most of them have lived a short life and a good one, but I doubt it. I have never kept turkeys and so am open to persuasion, but by all accounts an intelligent thought crossing their minds is as rare as a silver sixpence in a Christmas pudding. They have little charm but a neighbour did once keep one as a pet and was occasionally seen picking it up, stroking it, and whispering in its ear. It never seemed to notice.

But lack of brain is no excuse for what has been done to the turkey in the interests of commercial gain and supposed consumer desire. The enlargement of their breasts to the point of deformity is well documented. But, as I say, it is too late now. We must make note to do something about it next year.

What concerns me more is not so much what has become of the turkeys, but where have all the feathers gone? Not only turkey feathers: on the table of nearly every meat-eating family this Christmas will have been some form of poultry, and logic demands that somewhere is a mountain of discarded cladding.

At least, I hope it is discarded, for lurking in the back of my mind are stories of poultry feathers being processed for their protein, and then fed back to poultry to fatten them. Perhaps it

was just a rumour, possibly not that it is believable these days is sufficiently worrying. Feathers are much on my mind because an increasing part of my life is spent in intimate contact with them. Hardly a minute of my waking life passes without a thought of feathers, and every moment of my sleep is spent cocooned in them. We have just bought a feather bed. It has changed my life. Feather beds died out with maiden aunts and a certain class of seaside boarding house, and in recent years we have been persuaded to believe that the best night's sleep was to be had by lashing ourselves to what might as well be a plank. Like so many others, we fell for the line, bought a bed as hard as a slab and expected to live long and fit lives. The fact that we woke in pain every morning for 15 years did not matter. Hard beds are good for you. They said so.

Of course, had I looked around me I would soon have learnt that the Sleep as Suffering school of thought was flawed. Having kept pigs and observed their sleeping habits (and pigs do rather more sleeping than anything else) I would have seen how they made themselves comfortable and copied them. In the



PAUL HEINEY

winter, they retreat to their sties, dig their powerful snouts into the straw and shovel it into a corner till it is of mountainous proportions. Then they sit on top, and it sinks under their weight and rises up around them like a Yorkshire pudding in a hot oven. Then they sleep. And now I have joined them; for sleeping in a feather bed is no different to what the pig sets out to achieve with its straw. At first sight, a plump feather bed appears to be an impossible perch: it sits on the bed as high as a meringue, but lie on it and it sinks, taking you into its feathery grasp as you fall, allowing you the happiest of landings. And there you are for the night, as snug as a pig.

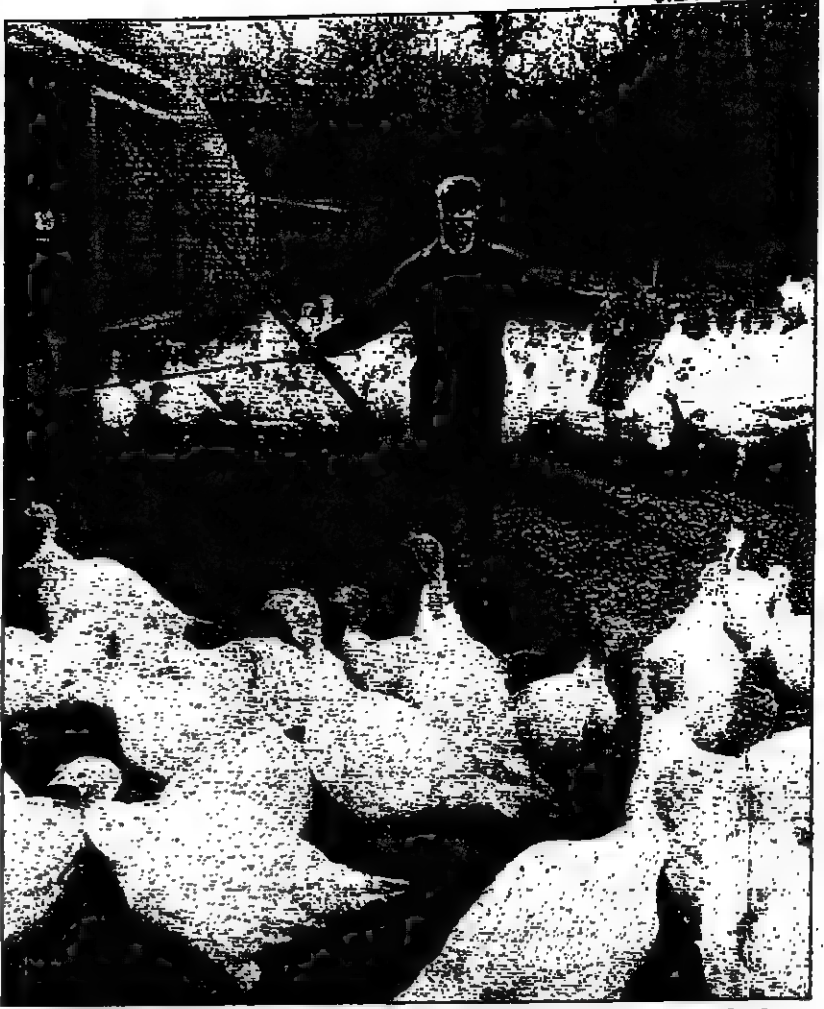
It is not an entirely idle business, for you must plump up your bed every morning if you are to enjoy the sinking sensation at bedtime, and given the weight of feathers this can qualify as aerobic exercise. My only sad thought is for the ducks who sacrificed their down for my comfort. I wonder, as I roll over, how many ducks there are down there, and could the burden of the duck not be relieved by all the turkey feathers which must go flying at this time of year? Annie Elliott of the Feather Bed Company in

Tiverton, who made mine, tells me that no, you could not use turkey because "they don't do the three-dimensional curl that ducks feathers can, which is why duck feather beds keep their shape". Poor old turkey; useless for everything except stuffing. "Those old feather beds of granny's were often made with chicken feathers which are a bit like a turkey's, and that's why they went lumpy," she said.

She reminded me of a chorus of a verse written in praise of the feather bed and which I may well be singing next year instead of Christmas carols:

*It was nine feet tall and six feet wide, soft as downy chick
It was made from the feathers of forty-seven geese,
Took a whole bolt of cloth for the tick,
It'd hold eight kids and four hound dogs and a piggy we stole from the shed.
We didn't get much sleep, but we had a lot of fun on Grandma's feather bed.*

And now, although I have only recently risen, all this talk of my feather bed is making me drowsy. I can only say that had the Bethlehem shepherds not been seated on the ground, but snoozing on a feather bed, the appearance of the Angel of the Lord might have escaped them completely. So, a happy new year, and please wake me in time for 1997.



Turkey farmers should do something useful with those discarded feathers



Dorset sheep lamb an average of three times in any two-year period. Their unique ability to punch holes in the farming calendar was noted by farming experts as early as 1707

I'll never find another ewe

Dorset sheep breed all year and they don't mind the cold. Not only that, they have come to the financial rescue of cattle farmers in crisis

Newborn lambs nudge at their mothers for their first feed in the real world. Dozens more, their stomachs already full of the milk and its immunity-giving colostrum, snuggle down in the warmth of the straw. Some just bleat in bemused chorus. The forecast says tonight will be clear, crisp and starlit. The scenes strike obvious seasonal chords. But this is Jim Dufosse's farm at Warminster, in the Wiltshire winter. "It's the last of the lambing," he says. "It means I can have some sleep at last."

Nearby, on the chill, wind-swept Salisbury Plain, more of Dufosse's 330 ewes graze with their young, on land available under licence from the Ministry of Defence. It may not be the traditional greetings card setting — but this particular shepherd is well satisfied. This Christmas, the 570 new lambs have been a godsend.

For Mr Dufosse, 34, and his wife, Jacqui, this has been the year of BSE, of unsaleable beef and of disappearing cashflow. Most painfully, it has been the year that saw 45 of their home-reared cattle compulsorily destroyed and burnt.

He says: "If you've reared beef cattle from calves, you will have had them for two and a half years. They're for

human consumption and you know there's a purpose to it all. But to be suddenly told that these animals, looking perfect, and at the stage where people want to buy them, are going to be burnt and thrown away, it's devastating. For three weeks I sent someone else to go and check the cattle. I just couldn't face it.

"It's been a terrible year but my Dorset lambs have been the silver lining." Mr Dufosse is the fifth generation of his family to farm as a tenant of the great Longleat Estate. The Dorset Horn, and its hornless derivative, the Poll Dorset, are the only breeds of sheep that lamb at any time of year, including Christmas.

The unique ability of Dorsets to punch holes in the traditional farming calendar was noted by farming cognoscenti as early as 1707. Edward Lisle wrote in his book, *Observations in Husbandry*, of a tenant whose lambs were born at yuletide and "sold fat to the butcher at Lady Day [March 25]."



Jim Dufosse: "My Dorset sheep have been this year's silver lining"

By the late 1800s, Dorsets were coming to the rescue of a British agricultural industry that was in deep crisis from a succession of poor harvests. Breeders realised that they had an animal that could provide Australia and North America with stock and im-

prove the quality of their flocks. Lambing an average of three times in any two-year period, Dorsets remain as versatile as ever. And with the modern farming industry now fending off a crisis of another kind, it could well be the breed whose time has come again.

Over the past 18 months, membership of the 105-year-old Dorset Horn and Poll Dorset Sheep Breeders Association has grown steadily from

325 to 400. Its secretary, Liz Johnson, says a crucial factor was winning Supreme Champion at the 1995 Royal Show but she does not rule out an indirect link with the aftermath of BSE — with farmers looking to recoup their losses and to build a broader base for the future.

"The Royal Show was like winning the Grand National," she says. "I think people are now looking not just at the Dorset, but at sheep generally. But the bottom line is that they have to look at profit margins and turnover — and the Dorset can provide a good return on capital investment."

"If there is a crisis, you look to other aspects of the business to back it up — which is why it is important not to have all your eggs in one basket. You don't like to gain at somebody else's expense. It's sad, but that's life."

Dorset flocks, well able to stand the cold, are established in Scotland, Northern Ireland, and parts of the north of England. But 100 ewes have recently been shipped to a diversifying beef farmer in Derbyshire.

Mr Dufosse, always a fervent ambassador for Dorsets, believes the breed is ideally placed to become permanently established beyond its West Country stronghold. "We've got such a good product. It's in their genetic makeup to lamb whenever."

"They can move according to market forces so you can be producing lamb when others are not, and the lambs naturally reach their finished weight within ten weeks."

For Ms Johnson, Dorsets have more endearing attributes. "They're nice to be with — placid and easy going. They can also be very stubborn. But that's not a problem because it means they're going to survive."

Mr Dufosse will drink to that. He says: "The Dorsets have given us a reason to go out the door in the morning. This Christmas, my youngest boy, Joseph, has been in his first nativity play. He didn't want to be one of the wise men. He just wanted to be a shepherd."

Avian Pucks weave their magic again

FEATHER REPORT

ONE OF THE best bits of news in the British Trust for Ornithology's latest breeding bird survey is that linnet numbers are up again. This survey compares the summer of 1995 with the summer of 1994, and it finds that there was a 15 per cent rise in the linnet population from one year to the next.

Linnet are among those weedseed eaters of farmland and heaths which have been most badly hit by herbicides. They come down from the hedges to feed on dandelion and sorrel seeds in the summer, while in winter they turn more to the pink persicaria, and to goosefoots such as fat hen, which scatter plenty of seeds on the ground.

They have the lightest, most dancing flight of all the small birds, and as they go they seem to sprinkle their rapid twitters and twanging notes over the fields. In summer, one of the most animated of all bird sights is a male linnet, swaying on the topmost twig of a bramble or gorse bush, and sweeping off with his mate the moment she emerges from the tangle where she has been building their nest. They are the avian Pucks or Aniels.

Perhaps the campaign to encourage farmers to let their set-aside fields alone until the weedseeds have ripened, and to leave verges and headlands to themselves, is beginning to take effect. Greenfinches, which often accompany linnets, were up 8 per cent.

Robins and wrens are still both very common birds, fortunately, but they are affected by hard winters and their numbers go up and down. This survey records a small increase for both of them. In the mild weather just before Christmas, I heard both species singing in London gardens before dawn — but they have to work hard to find small insects and spiders in the frost and snow.

A large increase was recorded for the stonechat, which is a near relative of the robin, and like it, it has a red breast, though the male's black head and broken white collar make it quite distinctive. It is most commonly found in gorse bushes on moors, and especially on seaside cliffs, but it moves around in winter and at this time of year you may come across one on patches of waste ground or even allotments — the closest it gets to being a household bird. It draws attention to itself by its sharp call, like two pebbles being knocked together.

I was not surprised to learn that moorhens and coots were up in numbers. The solitary, bad-tempered coots seem to have territories along every

few yards of river now, while the fields alongside rivers and ponds are full of moorhens scurrying for cover when you get near them, the white feathers on each side of their cocked tails flashing like rear lights.

Of the other wintering British birds, rises in the numbers of herons, buzzards and lapwings are most notable. There were also quite substantial increases for a number of summer visitors — which at present, of course, are enjoying the sun in the Mediterranean or in Africa.

Birdlovers who have lost the house martins from under their eaves will be glad to know that this survey indicates that they may be coming back, with an increase of 12 per cent recorded. Scaled martins showed a quite spectacular rise — 52 per cent — though swallows appear still to be decreasing.

Wheatears and whitethroats, chiffchaffs and willow warblers were all up. "I noticed myself that the countryside was alive again with those last three species last summer — whitethroats scolding in the hedges, willow warblers singing in small spinneys and along railway embankments, chiffchaffs everywhere in the high treestops."

HOWEVER, there are losses too, and one of the saddest is the decline — calculated at 8 per cent — in yellowhammers. This was also something I thought I detected in the last couple of summers. For the past 20 years, as the fields have grown more silent, the yellowhammer's ringing song has continued to sound on, all the more noticeable since it is about the last bird left singing after the wheat has been cut in August.

But this year and last I was sure there were fewer about in the parts of England I know well. It is all rather mysterious, because the yellowhammer also lives in scrub on weedseeds, in the same sort of habitat as many greenfinches and linnets. Few of the other changes I have mentioned could have been predicted — so let us hope that yellowhammers, too, have only suffered a temporary setback. Now we shall see what is in the nest for 1997.

DERWENT MAY

What's about: Birds — look out for visitors to gardens such as reed buntings, meadow pipits, yellowhammers and skylarks. Twickenham — red-breasted goose, Cudmore Grove, Essex: Spanish sparrow, Waterside, Cumbria: snowgoose, Wellney, Norfolk. Details from Birdline, 081 700222. Calls 40p a min cheap rate, 30p at other times.



The linnet population has started to pick up at last



Diving
amid the
teeming
coral
Red Sea · 13

THE TIMES travel

How to plan
your own
dream
holiday
America · 14,15



The lemurs and their lost world

Madagascar is a
must for anyone in
love with nature

Lemurs are almost too cute to live. This is a fact, whether they are leaping through the trees or sunbathing in uncannily human fashion — faces raised, little paws firmly placed on knees.

Lemurs are synonymous with Madagascar and, alone, are a good enough reason for battling through the bureaucracy and awe-inspiring roads which help to form the world's fourth largest island. But add glorious beaches, primary rainforests and Lost World beauty and you will find that Madagascar, still remarkably tourist-free, contains enticements around every corner — and 95 per cent of its magnificent flora and fauna is endemic.

But concentrating solely on nature does a disservice to the most beguiling of Madagascar's inhabitants — its people, the majority of whom are crammed into Antananarivo, the island's extraordinary capital. A French medieval town crossed with Terry Pratchett's Discworld city, Ant-Morpoik, Tana is a prerequisite of Malagasy travel, if only because all roads ultimately lead there.

Toy houses pile up the hills and a huge open-air market heaves with people and hundreds of stalls selling everything from live chickens to model cars made from fly-spray cans. But add a guild of beggars, open sewers and numerous dark alleys down which the tourist dare not venture, and one could be forgiven for wanting to get out as soon as possible. This would be a pity, because Tana has its own character and, in a way, sums up the island remarkably well.

Although Madagascar is essentially a Third World country, the myth that it must therefore be cheap should be quickly dispelled. True, the basic essentials cost little enough, but if you want to move comparatively quickly, visit the national parks or take advantage of the formidable under-water diving sites, expect to pay considerably more.

Madagascar is one of the poorest nations in the world. Tourists, by comparison, are very rich. This is the bottom line and will be the gullest response every time you blanch with horror at the extortionate prices charged for internal flights or car hire.

The island comprises four distinct

regions and if you are limited by time, the only practical option for seeing them all is to fly Air Mad — which, despite its picturesque nickname, has an impressive safety record. Flight also becomes far more enticing when you know an hour's journey by plane would take several years off your life by taxi-brousse.

Our party initially decided to explore the hire-car option, speed not being entirely of the essence. Thanks to Olivier, the Del Boy Trotter of Tana, we acquired a Peugeot in remarkably good condition plus Davis, an extremely personable driver. There are several self-drive firms in Tana, but because most of the roads comprise one vast pothole, it seemed prudent to let someone else do the work, even if we did have to get out and push a couple of times.

Another bonus of a Malagasy driver is that you are introduced to people you might not, as Vazahas, otherwise meet. "Vazaha" (Malagasy for light-skinned foreigner) is the word you will often hear thrown in your direction. This is extremely endearing when shouted by huge-eyed children, less so coming from leering men in large trucks. Vazahas are, in many places, still a source of wonder — in fact, the poorer and more isolated the village, the more delighted people are to see you. An impromptu England v Madagascar football match (played with a rag ball) demonstrated this by drawing a huge crowd of giggling children and cheering grown-ups.

We stopped first in Antsirabe, a truly weird town. Madagascar, once a French colony, bears witness to that legacy in the beautiful buildings and — a bonus — delicious food. In Antsirabe's Grande Avenue, elegant 19th-century Parisian buildings line the wide cobbled street while a kilometre away are houses where the windows are stuffed with straw and an average of 15-20 people share four tiny rooms. That night, we ate in a local restaurant where a band performed gentle pop songs sung by sweet-voiced men and women.

Ranomafana National Park was reached after an impressive drive of 25 kilometres in two and a half hours. Worth it, though, when your wooden bungalow overlooks a waterfall and the only other sound is the wind in the trees. A guide is essential in the parks — apart from stopping you getting hopelessly lost, they can also spot a two-inch chameleon at 50 paces.

Fide ("I am in the Bradt Guide") certainly knew his stuff and our first view of free-range lemurs could never have been achieved alone. A guide who speaks English is also a delight. Malagasy and French being the two official languages. Conversations of the "how much is this tablecloth?" kind are all very well, but in-depth discussions on politics, local customs and *fady* (taboos) prove more tricky with O-level vocabulary.

Several parks later and we were still in no danger of finding lemurs — or indeed Madagascar — boring. You never tire of looking, whether it be at the gorgeous white *sifakas* leaping sideways along the ground, or the dusty Wild West towns, their inhabitants shrouded in blankets and sombreros.

Arriving in Fort Dauphin on the south-east coast some days later, we thought we'd hit Nirvana. Surely no beach could be more beautiful than Libanona? No lemurs more endearing than ringtails? But there was still Nosy Be with its endless white sand and stunning coral reefs and finally, and perhaps most magical, the Perinet reserve, less than four hours from Tana.

As you walk through the dripping rainforest just after sunrise and smell the newly washed freshness of the trees, you suddenly hear an eerie, oddly moving, whale-like call echoing for miles. These are the Indri, the largest lemur species, closely resembling teddy bears.

The word lemur means "spirits of the dead which are reincarnated and living in the forest" and, spellbound in the hushed, breathless dawn, you quickly find yourself hoping that the reincarnated spirits will continue to watch over this enchanted but fragile island.

SHARON ECKMAN

● The author was a guest of Air Madagascar.



The ring-tailed lemur is not shy of humans. The word lemur means "spirits of the dead which live in the forest"

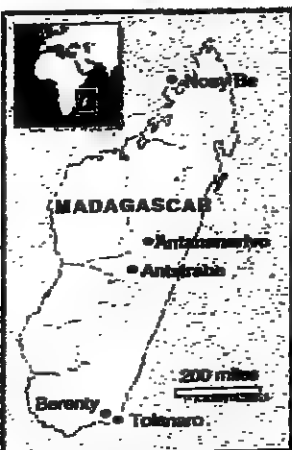
■ Air Madagascar (01293 523958) flies from Paris, Frankfurt, Zurich and Munich from £640 return, and can arrange connecting flights to these cities with British Midland from £120. Air France (0181-742 6600) flies from London via Paris.

■ The author's six-day tour of Madagascar, with driver, was booked with Julia Voyage, Antananarivo (00 261 226574, fax 234853), which can tailor an itinerary to suit individual requirements.

■ The exchange rate of Malagasy franc is at present 6,000 to the £1. French francs, dollars, sterling or travellers' cheques are all accepted. Credit cards are of little use outside the capital. Malagasy francs cannot be taken out of the country or changed back to hard currency, so cash only what is essential, especially towards the end of the trip.

■ British passport holders require visas for Madagascar. These cost £35 and are valid for 30 days. It is advisable to get a visa before leaving Britain from the Consulate of Madagascar at

MADAGASCAR FACT FILE



16 Lanark Mansions, Pennard Road, London W12 (0181-746 0133).

■ Inoculations against typhoid, tetanus, diphtheria, polio and hepatitis are advised. Malaria is prevalent, discuss prophylaxis with your doctor. Take a first aid kit and sterile syringes for emergencies. Food is generally safe in hotels and restaurants but be careful

when buying from stalls. Drink only bottled water.

■ Never venture out in Tana wearing anything remotely valuable and never go out on foot after dark. Muggings are common in the capital, so always take a taxi or ask a security guard to escort you. Elsewhere is safer, but you are still advised against taking valuables to Madagascar in the first place.

■ Food: the French legacy means baguettes are sold in at street stalls and the coffee (usually served with condensed milk) is excellent. There is also a strong Asian influence and soups Chinese appear on most menus in varying forms. Zebu meat (large-humped cattle) is either ambrosial or impossible to chew. Seafood is freshly caught. The local beer is Three Horse Beer and there are some good wines, the best being Lazan 1 Betsileo.

■ There are plenty of things to buy. Look out for semi-precious stones, musical

instruments, leather goods (belts and bags), beautiful wood carving, embroidered tablecloths and jewellery.

■ Refuse to buy anything made from tortoiseshell, snakeskin or crocodile. Also avoid sea shells and fossils. Be aware for find out about local customs and taboos. Ancestor worship is practised in Madagascar so never speak lightly of death, ancestors or tradition. Also help to preserve the ecosystem by keeping to established tracks and note that it is illegal to buy any indigenous plants or articles of funerary art.

■ Sarah Anderson of the Travel Bookshop (0171-229 5260) recommends: *A History of Madagascar* by Mervyn Brown (Dorland, Tunnicliffe, £12.95, ISBN 1 853 68745 6). *Madagascar Travels* by Hilary Bradt (Bradt, £14.95, ISBN 1 898 32340 2). *Madagascar and Comoros. Travel Survival Kit* (Lonely Planet, £9.95, ISBN 0 864 42196 6).

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Argentina and Costa Rica: Despite their comparative sizes, each has the same appeal for travellers – wildlife



FACT FILE

- The author flew to Buenos Aires with Varig. St George's House, 11 Conduit Street, London W1R 0HG (0171-257 3131), which has services from Heathrow on Wed, Thurs, Fri, Sat and Sun from 10.00.
- Aerolíneas Argentinas and Austral fly daily from Buenos Aires to all major cities in Argentina. LAPA flies in Tandil on Tue, Wed, and Thurs. The most interesting area of the country tends to be a long way from Buenos Aires. Adventurous or thrifty travellers might consider travelling by bus (good) or train (less so). Land journeys vary from 15 to 36 hours.
- Accommodation on Argentine estancia can be arranged locally in Buenos Aires through Pauline Edrooke at V.Y.T. Carlos Pellegrini 739, 5th Floor, 1000 Buenos Aires, (00 541 322 2011), or in London through Steamond South American Travel, 23 Euston Street, London SW1 (0171-730 8648). Prices vary from about £75 to £150 per person per day, including full-board and taxes. Transport from the local airport to the estancia can be arranged. The price varies according to distance. £31 for San Juan Porlaia, £25 for El Bordo de Las Lanzas, £12.50 for Acelain. The price includes three passengers, or four with light luggage.
- The best time of the year to visit the Esteros de Iberá is July to late Sept/early Oct. Salta and the northwest, Aug to Oct. Acelain, Sept to Nov/Mar to May.
- Visas are not required for British passport holders staying less than 90 days.
- The Argentine currency is the peso. The present exchange rate is 1 peso to about 65p.



The dramatic peaks of the Andes on Argentina's western border are in huge contrast to the pampas edged with tropical jungle

A landscape to sigh for

The old South American joke goes that when God was about to complete his creative work on the continent, and was putting the finishing touches to the southern tip, representatives from all other continents came to see Him. "It's not fair, Lord," they complained. "You've given Argentina every landscape and every climate. You've made it so beautiful." God thought for a moment. "I haven't been unfair," he replied. "I also gave it the Argentine people."

Whether the locals deserve the title is a matter of perpetual argument between them and their neighbours, but everybody agrees that Argentina is a beautiful and varied country: the central plains of the pampas are edged with tropical jungle and the magnificent Iguazu waterfalls in the northeast; the multi-coloured mountains and valleys of the northwest, where local life preserves traces of the Inca culture; the colossal peaks of the Andes all along the western border – varying from the vineyards and ski stations in the central region to the great lakes, woods and glaciers in the south; and the marine life

along the Patagonian coast, with its breeding grounds for sea lions, seals, penguins and whales.

All these contrasting regions share a common feature: Argentina is a virtually empty country. You can feel alone in the landscape, to experience nature more or less as God left it, probably the greatest pleasure imaginable for serious travellers.

The price to pay for this privilege is a shortage of comfortable accommodation close to the great sights. In some cases, a good hotel is available nearby, but often it's necessary to make long journeys from the nearest town, which can be a hundred miles away or more in Patagonia, or other isolated regions.

However, Argentine law has come to the rescue of adventurous travellers in an unexpected way. Estancias, as estates are called here, have to be divided equally among heirs: the share that includes the estate house inevitably carries a smaller acreage of productive land attached to it. After several generations, economics have forced many landowners to use their big houses to generate income,

so they take in paying guests. Standards of service vary from excellent to charmingly amateur but, in most cases, the accommodation is far superior to whatever else is available locally. The owners do their best to help visitors enjoy the rural life, their ancestors having had first pick of the most beautiful spot in the area.

I chose to stay at three estancias in very different regions, but there are dozens of them, all over the country.

The Esteros de Iberá, the great marshes of the Paraná river, cover more than a million acres of the province of Corrientes, near the border with Paraguay. The vast lagoons and wetlands are one of the richest wildlife reserves in Argentina: jacaras (the local alligator), swamp deer, monkeys, ostriches and the rare aguara-guazu (hairly wolf) co-exist with more than 200 species of birds. One of them is the jabiru, the largest stork in the western hemisphere and a startling sight when in flight against the deep blue sky.

Until recently, the only way to visit the Esteros was either on day trips, giving a short, frustrating glimpse of their vastness, or by spending rough nights in tents. No longer: rooms are available at San Juan Porlaia, a large livestock ranch on the western edge of the marshes. Scheduled flights from Buenos Aires arrive at Corrientes several times a day, and transport can be arranged from the airport to the estate.

The comfortable house, a long, low building, has the

simple, white-washed beauty and echoing spaciousness of colonial days. The deep open gallery at the front faces the park with its exuberant subtropical trees: the polished terracotta tiles on the floor are the same rich red of the iron-saturated soil, which contrasts with the lush greens of the vegetation and the grass.

For fishing enthusiasts, Paso de la Patria is 60 miles away. During August and September, it is the dorado season, and fishermen come from all corners of the world to catch the gold-skinned fish, which vary in weight from 20lb to 40lb and are reputed to require even greater skill and stamina to land than salmon.

Nearly 1,000 miles to the west is the province of Salta. Settled in the 16th century by the Spaniards, Salta has many of the best examples of colonial architecture in Argentina, combining the Spanish style with the local Indian culture. The region is on the edge of the Bolivian high plateau, and altitudes vary from 2,000 to 4,000 metres (about 6,000ft to 12,000ft), but the landscape is extraordinarily varied, from arid mountain ranges and dramatic gorges, to subtropical, fertile valleys.

In one of the gorges, the valley of Siankaes, is El Bordo de Las Lanzas, a 400-year-old estate restored by its present owners. Daily flights are available from Buenos Aires to Salta or nearby Jujuy. Though the fauna and flora are different, the area rich in wildlife and the landscape is stunning.

El Bordo de Las Lanzas is a good base for visiting the region, and a great place to put your feet up and enjoy the beauty and comfort of the old house at the end of the day, watching the evening sky from the stone-floored courtyard, where the arches and roof of the gallery are covered by glorious climbing plants. Those who haven't seen the night sky in the southern hemisphere cannot know the

true, breathtaking meaning of "starry nights".

If you want a taste of the plush life of the Argentine cattle barons at the turn of the century in the middle of the Pampas, try Acelain, near Tandil, 250 miles south of Buenos Aires. Its creator, Enrique Larreta, was a writer, obsessed with the glory of Spain in the Renaissance, the subject of his best-known novel, *La Gloria de Don Ramiro*. After marrying an heiress, her land and money made it possible for him to fulfil his fantasy in 1915, when he built a huge Spanish-style house and chapel, surrounded by a landscaped park of 1,000 acres.

The house sits on a tall hill that dominates the surrounding plain, and flights of stone steps flanked by cypresses lead to the Arab-inspired water gardens and the great park.

The lofty interiors of the house are recreations of rooms of the period, with ceilings, floors, doors, fireplaces and works of art bought from Spanish convents or palaces.

Not content with creating this South American Xanadu for himself, Larreta built an Ali Baba's cave in the cellars, including huge jars full of fake treasure, as a playground for his grandchildren.

For visitors to Buenos Aires, one or two days in Acelain can be a welcome break from metropolitan restlessness. Conveniently, accommodation within the main house is not always available, and Acelain, like other really grand houses in Argentina, can be less user-friendly to paying guests than smaller, family-run homes.

The climate varies enormously, sometimes within the same province. Every region has its best period during the year, and in some areas there are seasons to be avoided. Good tourist guidebooks, or a reliable travel agent, can help you make the most of a great journey. And Argentines are much nicer than their neighbours would like you to believe.

WILLIAM GILL

Eco means living with tarantulas

The San José newspaper *Costa Rica Today* listed meetings for the Coffee Pickin' Square Dance Club, the Centre for Atitudinal Healing and the Refrigeration Service Engineers Society. As an extra public service, it reminded those readers who were about to move from a city hotel to a series of rural lodges, that the rainy season meant the transfer of the tarantulas from waterlogged burrows to the shelter of houses. However, the spider's reputation is worse than its bite: the tiny scarlet and blue frogs perched in the undergrowth are far more poisonous.

I will never read another local paper. I thought days later, as I lay perfectly still in my dark, stilted, wooden cabin on the Pacific coast watching a firefly pulsate across the room like some tiny green fluorescent UFO. The problem was the rustling in the rafters and the tiny frog hopping towards the wardrobe – all frogs are red and deadly in the dark.

What with the aptly named howler monkeys squabbling in the trees and a scurrying under the floor that could have been an armadillo but sounded bigger, I wasn't sure I was cut out for unspoilt Costa Rican eco-tourism.

At daybreak, our host assured me the frog, now in the wardrobe, was indeed small but also grumpy, the midnight scurrier probably his dog and the spider was in its burrow by the front door.

before tumbling and chasing ribbons of moulten lava down the mountainside. "Awesome", as most of the tourists would say.

Uncle Sam's influence in this part of Central America has been benign, paving the way for those of us worried that showing ecological solidarity means machete-ing your way through the undergrowth to the campfire, and *al fresco* plumbing where you encounter the wildlife when least convenient. There are more comfortable alternatives.

Costa Rica is not, however, a Forestworld theme park – yet. Jungle treks may return you to the hotel by nightfall, but flying objects of varying weight and wingspan necessitate strong repellent and steady nerves. Single file is the only way through dank, claustrophobic green corridors, where the exotic foliage seems faintly sinister. Orchids compete with sci-fi parasitic plants for light, and butterflies the size and colour of Wedgwood plates float by.

The Tilajari Hotel at Muelle, an hour from the Nicaraguan border and handy for Mount Arenal and some of the many national parks, is typical of Costa Rica's bid for the elite, as well as eco-tourism. It opened in 1991, with first-class bungalows in tropical gardens on the San Carlos river, where the house crocodile patrols the sandbanks and prehistoric iguanas bask on the grass. You can share your breakfast with a toucan, chat with macaws by the pool, or watch the humming birds.

Our guides Carlos and Didier, as well as having an encyclopaedic knowledge of their country, were so enthusiastic about the 850 species of bird recorded in Costa Rica that everyone became temporary twitchers.

Only two-thirds the size of Scotland, this tiny country allows easy exploration of its Caribbean and Pacific coasts, as well as the interior, but the Government recognises the difficulty of absorbing mass tourism which could overwhelm the unspoilt environment that attracts visitors.

In 1993 tourists replaced coffee as the top currency earner, yet in 1995 there were only 700,000. Numbers exploded as tourists cautiously returned to a more stable Central America and combined with the Mayan history of Guatemala with the nature of Costa Rica.

A dilemma may arise when the reality of hard currency, the people's wish for higher employment, and a rising standard of living clashes with the Government's aspirations of elite, ie, expensive and limited tourist packages.

Monterverde could be the future, and it doesn't work. Established by American quakers in 1951 near the country's premier cloud forest, it is one of the oldest tourist centres and it shows. An unplanned mess of home-made signs advertising pizza and hamburger joints, butterfly farms, aromatherapy, cheap forest tours, all decorated with badly drawn toucans, humming birds and a golden frog extinct for a decade.

Having previously encountered few tourists on empty roads, this was Mexican border town meets Woodstock. I had nostalgic thoughts of howler monkeys.

Costa Rica knows success may be its biggest problem, but this beautiful, peaceful country deserves to get it right.

CHRISTINE WHEELER

● The author was a guest of KLM Royal Dutch Airlines and Coré Kings Travel.



Tour guides Carlos, left, and Didier at Mount Arenal

COSTA RICA FACT FILE

- Coré & Kings, Fourth floor, Gertrud House, 10 Greenmarket Place, London SW1 (0171-875 5000) offers a 14-day Costa Rica Odyssey Tour from £1,750 per person sharing a twin room (single supplement £275). The price includes some meals and excursions and scheduled international flights with KLM. As well as the destinations mentioned in the article above, the tour includes Tortuguero on the Caribbean coast. Group departures in Feb, Mar, May, Aug, Oct and Nov. The company can also tailor-make individual itineraries.
- Currency: take small denominations US dollar travellers' cheques and currency. Don't even think about taking sterling, you might as well offer couch shells. Mastercard and Visa will get a better reception than Amex. The local currency is the colón, about 300:£1.
- Health: no compulsory requirements but precautions against hepatitis, tetanus, typhoid, polio and malaria are recommended. See your GP. Take a strong insect repellent if you suffer from bites.
- Climate: the dry season is between Dec and April, though the Caribbean coastal region tends to have a higher annual rainfall. Temperatures vary little from season to season and the main factor is altitude: eg, the coastal areas average up to 30°C, San José 26°C, and the micro-climates in, for instance,

- the cloud forests cooler. Our party visited at the beginning of the rainy season, preferred by some tourists as there are fewer visitors. We had hot sunny mornings with drizzle closing in only in the late afternoon. Most downpours were at night.
- Food: we stopped for lunch at roadside restaurants, which were without exception clean and welcoming. The average lunch costs about £5-£7: steak, sea bass, tacos, tortilla, rice dishes and fresh tropical fruit on all menus. A suitable lunch was always happily produced without fuss for vegetarians. The country's coffee is wonderful.
- Clothing: take mostly light cotton things – long-sleeved shirts and trousers – and stout shoes for the forests, waterpools for the rainy season. A torch is handy for walking from your accommodation to restaurant in rural areas.
- Crime: this seems less of a problem in the capital, San José, than other cities in Central America. We were not hassled by street vendors and saw virtually no beggars. Nor are there the slums that rear the eye and conscience in other parts of this continent. However, common sense and street cred are required in a strange city. Take advice from guides and hotel staff on restaurants and bars to visit at night: take taxis and order them at the hotel.

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America: Military-style planning on a trip to the western states gave one family their best holiday ever...

The American dream team

TRAVEL AGENTS can offer holiday-makers the world — at a price. They have the purchasing power to do deals with international airlines and hotels to package your holiday dreams to match your pocket. But what if you want to organise your own holiday, like you used to in the old days, and in the same sort of places

the travel companies offer? Can it be done? Efficiently? Cheaper? And will it be as satisfying? Times readers Sandra and Michael Silberstein, of Leeds, decided on a DIY holiday to the western states of America with their children, Daniel, 14, Rebecca, 11, and Deborah, eight. Here is their story of what happened.

The parameters of our Easter family trip to the western states of America were relatively straightforward. We were planning a holiday for two adults and three energetic children aged eight, 11 and 14. We wanted first-class accommodation, a fantastic itinerary covering all the famous landmarks and — most important — it had to fit a tight budget.

The budget for 15 days was limited to £3,500; no holidays paid for by travel companies or expense accounts here. This had to include our flights, car hire and accommodation. Could it be achieved?

We agonised over numerous tours to arrange the best itinerary. We knew certain things could not be missed but we had to fit this around a family holiday. Travelling all the time would be a recipe for disaster. The children would be bored and it would be unfair to them. We had to choose hotels with good indoor leisure facilities. We selected our hotels from the big chains — Hilton, Holiday Inn, Marriott and Best Western.

Bookings could be made via central reservations mainly on freephone numbers in the UK. All the leading chains accept cancellations up to the anticipated arrival date without charge so this gave us the flexibility to alter our route. Without exception, no one ever volunteered the cheapest room rate. I always had to ask. All the rooms accommodated five people and some charged a nominal rate for an extra bed in the room. The average cost per night for accommodation and breakfast for us all was about \$85 (£55). The prices were significantly cheaper

than booking through a travel agent. We landed in Phoenix, Arizona at 8pm in 80F to begin our journey to the Grand Canyon. After collecting our hire car and stopping overnight in Flagstaff, we set off on a scenic drive to visit one of the great wonders of the world. The Grand Canyon is operated by American National Parks and for £16 you can buy an annual permit which enables you to visit every National Park site in America.

Even though we were only visiting for two weeks, it was cheaper to do this than to pay separate entrance fees. As we drove around the South Rim, wonderful views greeted us at every turn but it was cold and we didn't envy the many walkers who venture into the depths of the Canyon.

Our route then took us through the Painted Desert to Monument Valley through the Navajo Indian Reservation. You can drive around Monument Valley on your own but with three noisy kids and a hire car, we opted for a four-wheel drive tour. It was fantastic — it looked just as it does on all the films.

After two days of canyons and monuments, however spectacular, we had to have a variation to keep everyone happy and Page on Lake Powell, one of the largest man-made lakes in America, provided the ideal stop. Lake Powell looks like a lunar landscape and in the summer is overrun with tourists. At Easter it is deserted and in warm sunshine we hired a speedboat for \$70 (£42) which gave us an exhilarating taste of the magnificent vistas.

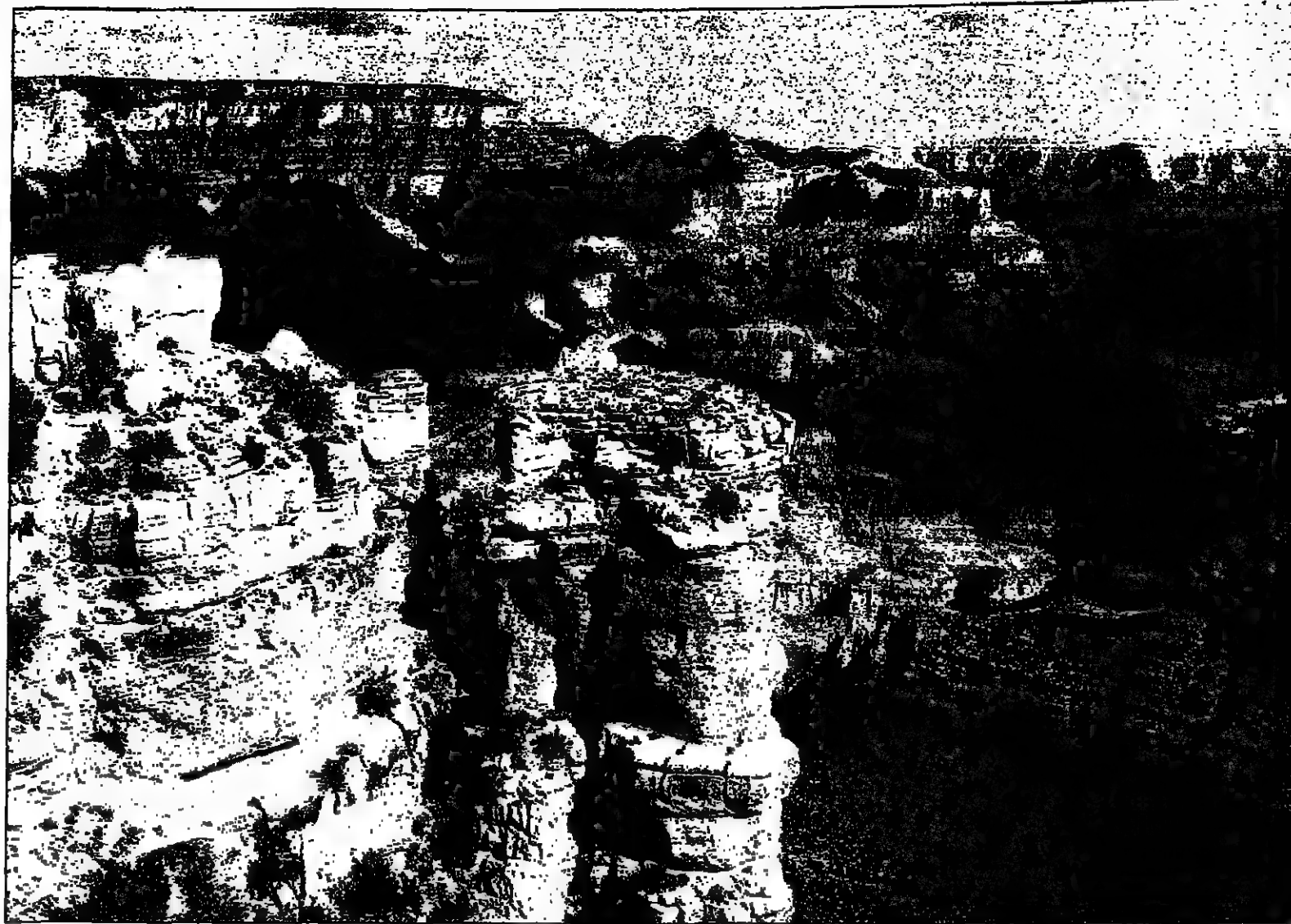
The drive from Page to Bryce Canyon is one of the most scenic in America. Here we stayed in Ruby's Inn, one of the oldest, most famous hotels in the region. The canyon, with its pink needle-shaped rocks gleaming in the sunshine, the tops still covered in snow, provided another magical day. Here we saw deer and talked to people from all corners of the world.

We all agreed, however, that we had had enough nature and set off for the other side of America. Las Vegas has to be seen to be believed. The hotels have wonderful facilities and food is served at giveaway prices to encourage you into the casinos. Gaming laws are strictly enforced and children are not allowed to gamble or loiter in the casino areas.

We had a great time in Caesar's Palace — particularly in the Forum Shopping Mall, one of the best shopping malls in the world. Every hour, Roman statues "come to life" in a show with coloured dancing fountains.

We reluctantly left our hotel, the Flamingo Hilton, after three days but Disneyland beckoned. Driving through the Mojave Desert to Los Angeles, we faced blizzards. Later, in the middle of the desert, we passed the largest thermometer in the world — registering 38F.

Every parent pretends they are only going to Disney because of the children, but why pretend? We had a great three days there, went on every ride and met every Disney character. However, you should ignore what the guide books say about going in at the crack of dawn. The park is much quieter after



Many visitors choose to see the Grand Canyon on foot. The Silberstein family, however, admired the views from the comfort of their hire car

5pm, the queues are shorter and it is open until midnight, giving plenty of time to enjoy everything. We spent the days in the hotel pool, the Hard Rock Café and Rodeo Drive, and the evenings in Disneyland. We stayed at the Marriott in Anaheim, near Disneyland, because it offered an excellent family package with room, breakfast, Disney tickets and a free trolley bus to the park.

The last few days of our trip took us to northern California where we were back to natural beauty again in the Yosemite Park against the backdrop of the Sierra Nevada mountains. We had reserved a room at a Best Western in Oakhurst, only a few miles from the park. We had two days of incredible weather variations which only added to the excitement.

The first day we threw snowballs at each other among the highest Redwoods in the world and lunched as the mist descended early over the valley in the renowned Ahwahnee Hotel.

By late afternoon the sun had come out and the following day the temperature hit 75F. The perfect picture-postcard viewing made for one of the most memorable days ever. We had seen Yosemite Falls at their most magnificent.

San Francisco was our last stop and we were determined to end on a high note. The weather was perfect for the two days we were there. Our hotel was the Marriott at Berkeley, with lovely views over the Bay and the best

indoor pool of the holiday. We went to Muir Woods and saw the Golden Gate bridge at its most beautiful in the warm sunshine. The view to the prison at Alcatraz was spectacular and, of course, we did our own car chase down the steep streets including Lombard Street, the windiest street in the world. It was then time for our last-minute shopping at Fisherman's Wharf. We all decided we would love to live in San Francisco.

When we dropped the car at San Francisco airport we had covered 2,400 miles. It had been a wonderful holiday with so many high spots. It took a lot of organising but we agreed it was well worth it and we had achieved everything we had set out to do.

SANDRA SILBERSTEIN

HOW WE PLANNED OUR TRIP

What was your budget?

We set the budget for flights, hotels and car hire at £2,500 with £1,000 for food and entertainment.

How much did you actually spend?

The basic cost was £2,670, plus about £930 for extras. Total £3,600.

How did you choose an airline?

We teleaxed airlines and eventually used US Airways (0161-483 8403), flying United Airlines.

What did the flights cost?

We flew from Leeds-Bradford via London to

Phoenix, Arizona, returning from San Francisco. Three adult return fares and two children's fares cost

£1,750 — including two weeks' car hire.

How did you book hotels?

All our accommodation was reserved in the UK through Holiday Inn, 0800 897121; Marriott, 0800 221222; Best Western, 0800 393130; and Hilton, 0345 581595.

How did you book cars?

Via Alamo Rent-a-Car by US Airways (above).

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just add gunpowder

ROYAL CARIBBEAN

We go plenty of kicks on Route 6

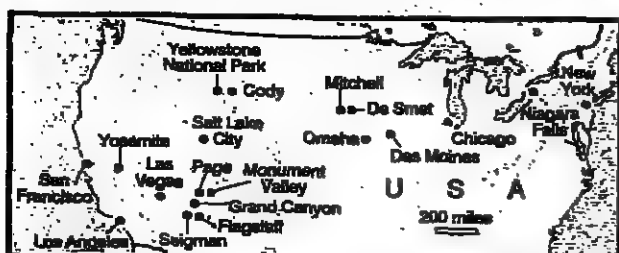
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... while a more mature party crosses from coast to coast by coach — two *Times* readers tell their stories

We got plenty of kicks on Route 66



Our coach pulled up for a rest room and coffee break stop at a store on the banks of the Mississippi. A pick-up truck parked alongside and a pretty young woman got out. She looked at us with obvious puzzlement. "Where you guys from?" she asked. "England, Ireland, Scotland, South Africa, Australia," we answered. She laughed uproariously. "You've come all this way just to see Iowa?" She was still laughing as she swung the store door open.

It was the ninth day of our trip across America. We had left Chicago at 7.30am and were due to arrive in Sioux City at 6.30pm, a journey of 565 miles. We would lunch at Des Moines and have afternoon tea north of Omaha. It would be the longest day of the tour, but even in the rich farmlands of Iowa, despite the opinions of the locals, there was enough to prevent most of us from falling asleep.

It took 21 days to travel from New York to San Francisco via most of the favourite tourist spots — Niagara Falls, Mount Rushmore, Grand Canyon, Bryce Canyon, Yellowstone Park, the Badlands. We covered 4,932 miles, crossed 18 states, took in 11 cities, seven national parks and four time zones. As we looked at Alcatraz from Fisherman's Wharf in San Francisco, even the accountant from Maidstone admitted that it had been fantastic value for money.

Was it, though, a way of "seeing America" that many potential visitors might wish to take up? Our own initial worries concentrated on three factors: our fellow travellers with whom we would be confined for 21 days — what would they be like? Then, how would those used to their own transport adapt to coach travel? And, was crime in the American cities we would visit as bad as statistics suggested?

A first glance around our coach on its city tour of New York brought immediate reassurance. The people seemed well-travelled and sensible, and looked as if they had just completed a morning's walk in the Peak District and now wanted a good pub lunch. These first impressions were sound. Group members were mature and self-disciplined, but maturity brings its own priorities so that when we arrived at Gettysburg, there was a rush for the rest room in McDonald's and not the spot where Lincoln gave his Address. We soon realised that

the relentlessness of the journey would make all but the most determined of free spirits blanch at the thought of so much driving. Coach travel, though, had its own discipline. We soon had a 6-7-8 routine: 6am wake-up call, 7am luggage outside room, 8am departure. Those who had done National Service found this regime rather familiar, but no one grumbled about it.

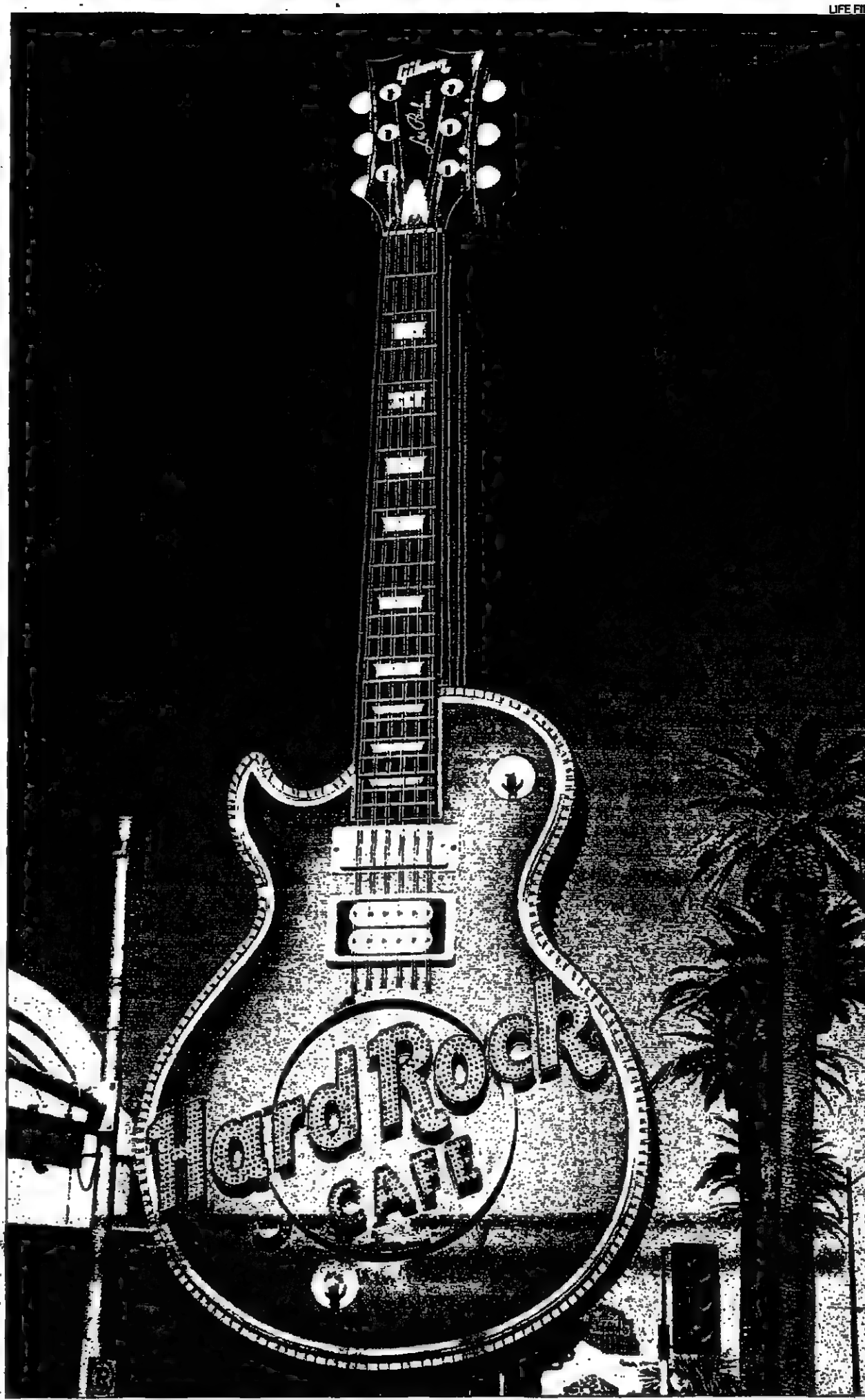
As for crime, our guide reassured us: "Practise precaution not paranoia." In New York we visited Harlem where we were told that it could be dangerous to draw too much attention to ourselves but Manhattan — Broadway, Times Square, Fifth Avenue — all seemed perfectly safe, in daylight anyway.

In Washington we were warned not to go into the eastern part of the city and in Chicago it was "don't go beyond the elevated railway" and "leave your luggage inside your rooms for collection tomorrow. This is, after all, Chicago". In Los Angeles a local map showed that our hotel, just off Hollywood Boulevard, was in one of the areas of greatest crime in the city. The sleaze only a hundred yards from the hotel was surprising. Nobody on the coach, however, had any trouble with crime: their evening walks were curtailed.

In San Francisco, a well-organised tour, it was surprising that serendipity played an important part. We found that, for only 50 cents, the Staten Island Ferry gave as good a view of the Statue of Liberty, Ellis Island and the skyscrapers of Manhattan as the tourist steamers charging £10. In Washington our guide somehow bypassed the long queues at the Capitol Building and took us to hear a debate in the Senate (it appeared that the CIA had lost \$4 billion).

We arrived in Cody, Wyoming, at 6pm and instead of settling down to a relaxing drink, we were driven reluctantly to the Buffalo Bill Museum. An hour and a half later we were equally reluctant to leave, having had a fascinating insight into the history of the West.

For some, there were minor adventures. At the Devil's Tower, a national monument with a complicated mythology, a rattle snake joined the queue of ladies at the primitive lavatory. It was given priority. There was snow overnight in West Yellowstone, Montana,



You can't miss it — the sign for the Hard Rock Café in Las Vegas. American food becomes cheaper further west

yet when the air conditioning in the coach broke down en route to Las Vegas, the temperature was 105°F in not much shade. It was a severe test of the group dynamics which had been built up. Our party passed with Grade A.

Paradoxically perhaps, we were most impressed with that part of America which is normally viewed from a Boeing 767. Iowa was a state bulging from torrential rain and, with its green rolling country and obvious prosperity, it looked like a huge Cheshire.

South Dakota was more like a prairie state of imagination. Land had once been sold at five cents an acre and the settlers who passed through might have grabbed it with both hands, had they known of the "Badlands" further on.

For those whose children grew up reading *Little House on the Prairie*, and *On the Banks of Plum Creek*, South Dakota is Laura Ingalls Wilder country. She lived in the little town of De Smet and, as we drove down Route 90, we passed a signpost suitably inscribed.

One of the drawbacks to the way we had chosen to cross America was that diversions from the planned route were never contemplated. Some on the coach would have liked to have gone to Promontory Point to see where the transcontinental railway had been connected, but we drove steadily on to our next stop at Salt Lake City. Then again, those sites which were on the

schedule were meticulously visited. Mount Rushmore had to be seen on day 10, even if it was growing dark when we arrived. On day 12 we had to visit the Old Faithful Geyser in Yellowstone Park, even if we had to wait for 55 minutes for it to blow.

As we travelled west the rest rooms became a little more primitive, but with the trade-off that the meals became cheaper. At Lake Powell, south of Salt Lake City (the cleanest and probably the safest of American cities), we took one of the more ambitious optional excursions. We flew by light aircraft to Monument Valley to be driven around by a Navajo Indian called Jones, giving us a chance to discuss the life and hard times of Indians in America.

The resumed flight took us along the Grand Canyon. The view from the air must be one of the best on earth. Travelling from the pines of Salt Lake City to the Sodas and Gomorrah of Las Vegas and to unlovable Los Angeles reinforced our impression that this was a multi-layered society, and we were passing through it too quickly to appreciate it.

We stopped on Route 66 at Seligman, now a bypassed backwater, where even the proprietor of a shop selling Route 66 memorabilia was reluctant to discuss the future of his quiet town.

In Los Angeles our guide suggested that it was best not

to use public transport. The excursion to Disneyland (the happiest place on earth) did not impress our mature fellow travellers and most caught up on washing clothes or swam in the pool.

As we headed out to Ventura, Santa Barbara and Monterey the guide played the tape of Willie Nelson singing "On the road again, going to places I've never been, seeing things I'll never see again". It seemed entirely appropriate. Stout Cortez (more truthfully Bilboa) staring at the Pacific for the first time, must have felt the same as we did as the ocean came into view. We had made it from sea (all right, the East River) to shining sea.

In San Francisco we had our last city tour — Nob Hill, Lombard Street, the Golden Gate bridge, Chinatown, Fisherman's Wharf and there, looking well within swimming distance, was Alcatraz. It was time to swap addresses and in a quiet moment to check Baedeker, to confirm that we had seen just about everything that the book recommended on our route.

Weeks later we were still discussing the beauty of Washington, the surprisingly pleasant view of the Chicago skyline from Lake Michigan, the splendour of the Grand Teton Mountains and the strangeness of housewives playing the one-armed bandits in the local deli near our hotel in Las Vegas. It was a holiday that would not be forgotten.

BRIAN WALLEY

AMERICA FACT FILE

■ We booked with British Airways Holidays (01293 723121) and flew from Heathrow to New York, returning from San Francisco. Free flights from provincial airports to Heathrow were included in the tour price. Other airlines, such as Qantas, Virgin Atlantic, Lufthansa, American, Air New Zealand, KLM and United, also act as agents for the coach operator, as does Kuoni. The operator was Americantours International Inc. with offices at 6053 West Century Boulevard, Los Angeles, California 90045. It is advisable to book a tour with an English-only guide, to avoid listening to information in two or more languages. Jetsave (01342 327711) are agents for a similar tour.

■ It cost £1,569 each for the trip, including accommodation, city tours and visits. In 1997 it will cost from £1,752. Meals and optional excursions are extra. American breakfasts are great value for money at around \$10 (£6). With a sandwich lunch and evening meal, the daily average for food worked out at \$30 (£18) each. Optional excursions seemed slightly expensive. The light aircraft trip to Monument Valley and the Grand Canyon cost £25 each, but was well worth it. Recommended tips were \$243 (£122) for the guide and \$2 for the driver, per person per day (paid at the end).

■ The standard of hotels was excellent with the Omni Shoreham in Washington, the Las Vegas Hilton and the Hyatt Regency in Dearborn, Detroit, being outstanding. Holiday Inns featured prominently. The Hotel Edison in New York had a good location, just off Times Square, but was not among the best for food or accommodation.

■ Luggage was collected from rooms and delivered to them at the next hotel. Nobody lost any or had any damaged. A traveller's kettle, set to American voltage, was useful and permitted in the hotels. An iron and board were sometimes supplied.

■ Sufficient comfort stops were made to suit mature travellers, though many of these were at McDonald's (always clean) but occasionally at a rather primitive garage or general store. There were some very long days, with departures at 7.30am and arrival after 6pm. This was physically demanding, which older travellers might find tiring, even a little stressful.

■ Clothing. Mainly casual, even in the most sophisticated dining rooms. It snowed in early June in Yellowstone and was 105°F in Las Vegas three days later. It rained heavily in Iowa. A thick jersey and lightweight shirts and trousers/skirts were all essential, with comfortable walking shoes. Items that could be washed and dried overnight would be preferable.

■ The coach was air-conditioned and comfortable and the standard of driving was excellent. Compulsory daily seat changes were an advantage, ensuring that nobody had a view slightly restricted by a window pillar for longer than a day.

■ Overnight stops were: New York, Washington, Buffalo, Toronto, Detroit, Chicago, Sioux City, Rapid City, Cody, West Yellowstone, Salt Lake City, Bryce Canyon, Grand Canyon, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Ventura, Monterey and San Francisco.

■ City tours included were: New York, Washington, Toronto, Chicago, Salt Lake City, Los Angeles and San Francisco. Visits included to Philadelphia, Gettysburg, Niagara Falls, the Henry Ford Museum, the Sears Tower (Chicago), Badlands National Park, Mount Rushmore, Buffalo Bill Museum in Cody, Old Faithful Geyser and Mammoth Hot Springs in Yellowstone National Park, Lake Powell, Hoover Dam and Cannery Row.

■ Crime. The guide gave excellent advice on avoiding potential crime areas in the big cities.

■ Reading: The Travel Bookshop (0171-229 5260) recommends: *USA, The Rough Guide* (£14.99, ISBN 1 855 28161 0), *Four Great Novels*, by Dashiell Hammett (Pam, £9.99, ISBN 0 330 26850 3), *Road Trip USA*, by Jamie Jensen (Moon, £14.95, ISBN 1 56691 036 0).

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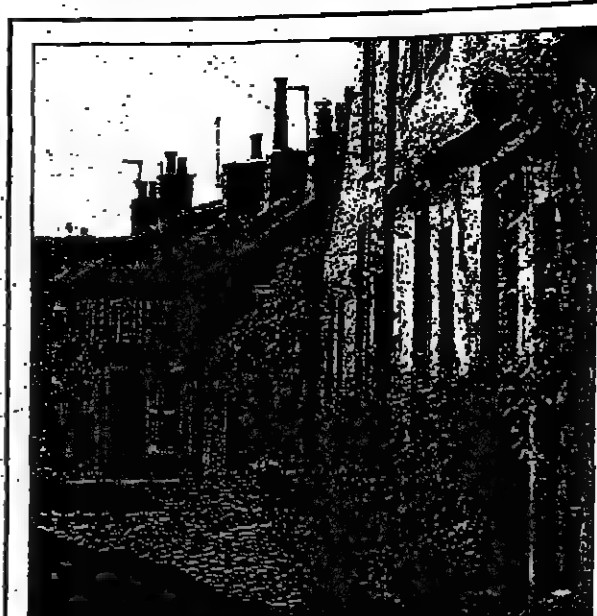
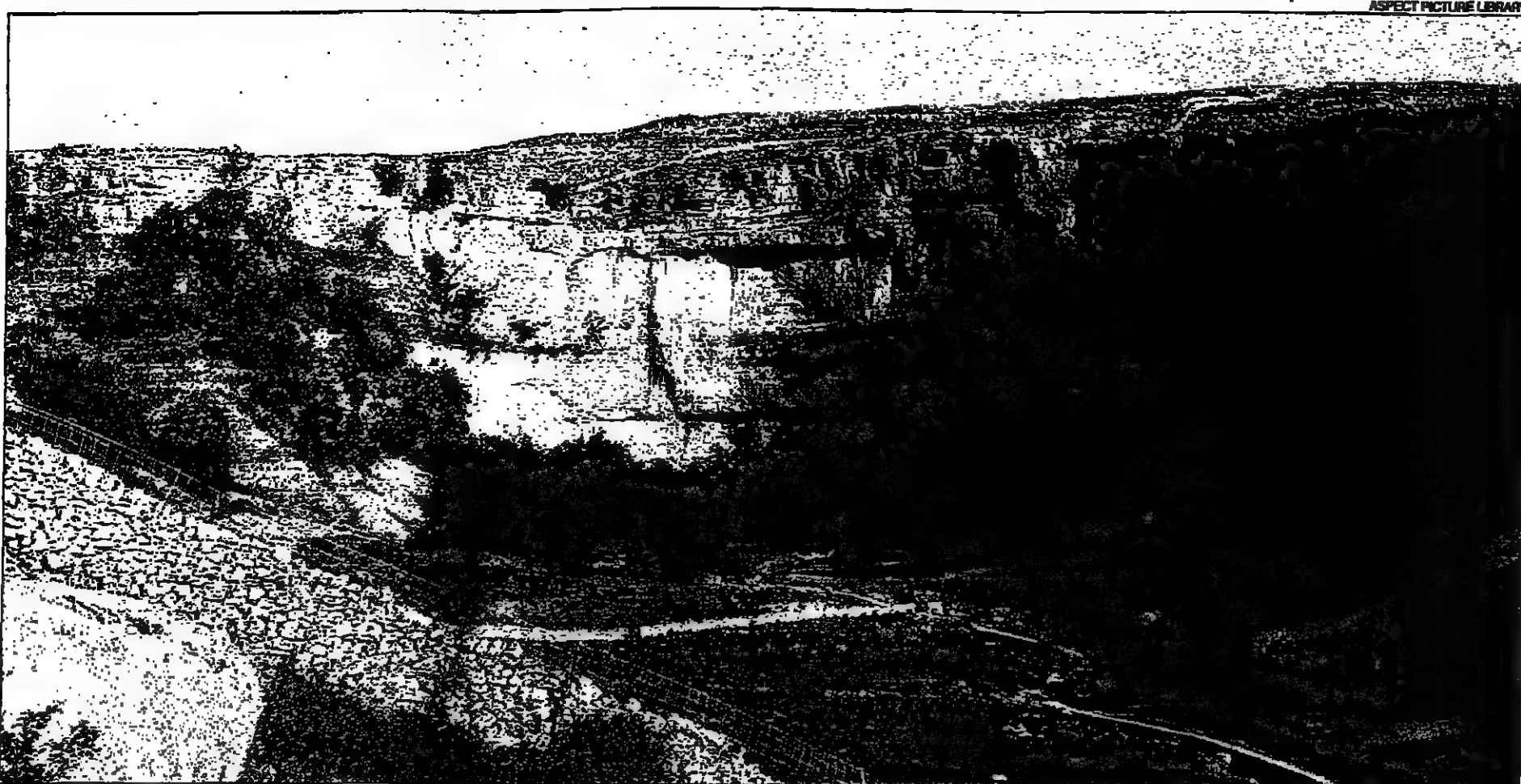
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DALES FACT FILE

■ Romantic gourmet weekends at 42 The Calls, Leeds LS2 7EW (0113-244 0099, fax 0113-234 4100), cost £271 per couple for two nights' bed, breakfast and dinner (not including wine). On the first night, guests have a three-course dinner at Brasserie 44; on the second night, a three-course dinner at the neighbouring Michelin-starred restaurant, Pool Court at 42 (0113-244 4242).

■ Theatre tickets are included in the price for shows at the Leeds Grand Theatre or the West Yorkshire Playhouse, subject to availability.

■ Walk details: Ordnance Survey Touring Map and Guide 6, "Yorkshire Dales".

Throughout the dales are scenic treasures beloved of walkers, such as Malham Cove in Wharfedale (above) and chocolate-box pretty Grassington village in Airedale (right)

Pity about the pud

A romantic gourmet weekend in Leeds? Remembering comedian Harry Enfield's Yorkshireman quip, "Don't talk to me about culture, I've been to Leeds", it was something not to be missed — a rare opportunity to ramble through the beautiful Yorkshire Dales, indulge guiltlessly in my love of good food and visit the theatre. It couldn't have been more cultural.

Naturally, I felt duty-bound to test out the "romantic" bit, too, and so it was that Tom was dragged up north one chilly autumn day.

We discovered a fine city with superb civic architecture, earning it a high ranking on my list of favourite weekend-break destinations. Like most big university cities, it boasts clusters of trendy shops and cafes, and an array of upmarket shops, which proved fertile hunting-ground for a friend's wedding present.

By early afternoon we realised we had to shed some calories before our first gourmet onslaught. Tempted by a spot on the map marked "waterfalls", our walk was to begin at Grassington, a village on the north bank of the River Wharfe, up the B6265 from Skipton. We parked the car in

nearby Linton to check out the claimed waterfalls. Linton Falls was a modest cascade. The view was best admired from the footbridge, where a few excited chaps had gathered to take photographs. Sadly, Linton Mill, which used to stand above the falls, has been replaced by unsympathetically modern houses.

The footbridge led us swiftly into Grassington, where we started our walk proper. We climbed the main street into village, then bore left to pick up the footpath for Conistone, the next village going north along the river. Once through the farmyard of Town Head, a 200-year-old stone farmhouse, we came to open countryside.

A right-hand fork looped us away from the river, over several stiles, to the site of a medieval village, the only remnants of which were a scattering of limestone cobbles dotting the ground.

Seeing Bastow Wood loom in front of us, we hauled ourselves over a stone wall on the left and headed straight in. We got a bit lost, because of the lack of a clear path, but wound our way through fairly dense woodland which led us, magically, to open, sun-filled patches of grass. Earlier in the day, the edges of these lovely glades

would have made perfect spots for a picnic.

It was time to head back to the river, through the adjoining nature reserve (Grass Wood). Because I adore river walks, the easy stroll downstream along the banks felt like the pudding at the end of a meal. It was incredibly scenic — wide meadows away from the road, jumping fish, and impressive rapids at a huge twist in the river's course (another good picnic spot).

Including stops and dithering, the walk took about three hours, and we felt we had earned our dinner, which was to be taken on our first night at the Brasserie 44 and the next day in the neighbouring restaurant, Pool Court at 42.

In both, the food was astonishingly good value. The Michelin-starred restaurant's melting *arte marin* was the best I have tasted.

Friends have also benefited from our gastronomic experience, because we have been eagerly copying the curried

mussels with saffron and pasta ever since.

The only downside was that the meal at the brasserie was suspended after the second course for an outing to the West Yorkshire Playhouse, where a vulgar production of *King Lear* was being staged. We returned to our tables after the performance, but couldn't face the pudding after watching Warren Mitchell wave his crown jewels at the audience.

Still, a gourmet weekend it was, even down to the breakfast, made memorable by spongy waffles and warmed maple syrup.

For Tom, highlights, along with both meals, included stereo speakers in the bathroom and a compliments slip tucked under the windscreen wiper of our rusty old banger... which goes to show that, despite the grand "romantic gourmet" tag, it's the little things that leave the deepest impression.

ANJANA AHUJA

■ The author was a guest of 42 The Calls.

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A taste of Tuscany

LOVERS OF Tuscany can make themselves at home in one of the region's historic villas, Il Lucchesiano, the last great summer residence built by the powerful Guinigi dynasty, governors of the Republic of Lucca in the 15th century.

The villa, available for holiday rental for the first time, sleeps eight, and is furnished with antiques and works of art. A pool, four-acre grounds and the services of a butler are included in the weekly rental starting at £3,225.

In a more rustic setting, Al Carl, a restored farmhouse in the Luccan hills, once owned by the film director David Lean, sleeps ten and costs from £1,475 to £2,825 a week. Both houses from International Chapters (0171-722 9560).

Two-tier TGV

FRENCH Railways (0990 300003) has introduced the first double-decker TGV on its fast Paris-Lyon service, thus avoiding the shortage of capacity during peak travel times. There are several departures each day, which will increase when more of these modern trains are delivered. The time of the journey is about two hours 17 minutes. The single fare starts from £32.40.

Mosquito tour

THE Mosquito Coast, named not after the insect but the Mosquito tribe, descendants of the inter-marriage between slaves and the indigenous Sumu tribe, as well as the Mayan

ruins at Copan and the Bay Islands are highlights of Reef and Rainforest Tours' (01803 866965) new itineraries in Honduras. They're aimed at adventurous travellers prepared to travel by mule, sea kayak, dug-out canoe, raft, and even a railway handcart.

Sixteen-day tours start at £1,395, but this price does not include international travel, which can be arranged.

Cabin caper

IN A original brochure, New England Country Homes (01798 869461) offers inclusive holidays in traditional shingle or clapboard cottages (Mark Twain wrote in one of them), log cabins in Vermont's backwoods, and Ocean front mansions overlooking Cape Cod.

You can fish from your living room at Page's Pond, a converted watermill beside a waterfall ten miles from Yale, where six sharing the property for a fortnight would pay between £717 and £1,059 each. A rustic late Victorian home with a 200ft private beach on Long Island Sound costs from £1,373-£1,603 for each of eight. All prices include return air fares, car hire, and overnight stays in Boston, and insurance.

Short break

INNTRAVEL (01663 628811), the firm that comes up with those reasonably priced auberges, offers year-round short breaks across the Channel by car, Eurostar, TGV or air. Two nights B&B in the luxury Amigo Hotel, just off Brussels

Grand Place, costs £208; similar weekends based on the Paris Hotel Laurence Opera, the former private residence of Toulouse Lautrec, costs £170, or at the art deco Hotel Ellysée Ceramie, £166.

Two nights in medieval Bruges, at the delightful little Prinzenhof, a former nobleman's mansion, costs just £110, which includes B&B and ferry crossing for car and passengers.

Villa view

SPECIALISING in Catalonia and the unspoiled parts of the Costa Brava (the stretch from Tossa to the French border still has some of the most delightful resorts in the Med), Spanish Harbour Holidays' (0171-966 9777) new ventures for 1997 include the villa with a view, the Villa Balanca, overlooking Cap Begur, costing from £595 per week, per property sleeping ten.

In the Pyrenees, a week's B&B at the converted Relais & Châteaux mansion, Hotel Torre Del Remei, starts at £590 each. Transport is not included in these prices, but the firm can arrange flights or Channel crossings.

Worldwide

FOUR airlines, Air New Zealand, Ansett Australia, Malaysia Airlines, and Virgin Atlantic offer a range of round-the-world air fares from £777 to £973, the fare depending on the number of stop-overs. A Wanderer Fares brochure explaining the option, is available from the airlines or selected travel agents.

Au naturel

NEW natural history courses from an environmental charity Field Studies Council (01743 850164) include an 18-day Ethiopia Experience from Lake Tana to Mount Dimu in November, visiting five major habitat centres such as lowland savannah and steppe grasslands, volcanic hot springs, and tropical forests. The cost is £2,250 fully inclusive. A new European tour, Birding in the Baltics: Wildlife And Culture in Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, costs £1,620.

Canary hop

MUNDI COLOR (0171-828 6021) offers an extensive island hopping programme in the Canary Islands of La Palma, El Hierro, Fuerteventura, Lanzarote, Gran Canaria, and Tenerife, with special £45 flights linking the islands.

Discount tent

CAMPING holidays in France and Spain are getting cheaper — especially if you can go before mid-May or in September.

Brittany Ferries with a new French and Spanish campsite programme offer a family of two adults and four children under 18 at the Raguene Plage camp site in Brittany a two-week tented holiday from £195 — which includes the crossing on one of their ferries, sailing from Portsmouth, Poole, and Plymouth to Caen, Cherbourg, St Malo, and Roscoff, and to Santander in northern Spain. Two weeks with French

Country Camping (01565 626266) at Le Camp de Florence in Armagnac country, with its own swimming pool, restaurant, and sports facilities, cost from £241, including ferry crossing.

Cheap golf

AN IMPROVED exchange rate and Cross-Channel competition have cut the cost of golfing in France. The Cresta Holiday (0161-929 1311) "Golf in France" programme, offers a seven-night holiday at the four-star Residence Royal at La Baule from £242 per person (based on four sharing), including the ferry crossing, and six free rounds of golf at a choice of courses.

Honeymoon

MARRAKESH'S La Mamounia Hotel is offering special three-night breaks during 1997; and SPA package with massage, manicure and Hammam sessions costs about £330; a golf break from £372 and a honeymoon and anniversary package £589, flights not included. Details from Leading Hotels of the World (0800 18123).

Childcare

SIMPLY Corsica (0181-747 3580) offers a child-care service for children aged from six months to ten, staffed by qualified British staff, for £55 for five half days, or £95 for five days.

CORRECTION

CONTRARY to the report on December 14 on Sanda's Royal Bahamian Resort and Spa in Nassau, watersports are included in the price.

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Norway: Remote fishing villages are found along a stunningly beautiful coastline where the cod is king

Fish are jumping, the cotton is high

Perhaps you have to be a fisherman truly to love fish. Or a Norwegian. I have reached this conclusion after a conversation with an affectionately drunken fisherman who sat next to me in the little plane which took us up into the Arctic Circle — from Bodø on the Norwegian coast to Leknes in the Lofoten Islands.

He was about to join a factory vessel for 30 days' sobriety and summer fishing under the mid-night sun and, in a mood to be romantic, kissed his fingers in anticipation of a superlative flavour and sniffed the air in appreciation of an aroma. He was describing a dead cod: he might have been talking about a good wine.

Declining an invitation to accompany him up into the Baring Sea, I pointed out rather crassly that, mercifully, being a fisherman was not such a dangerous occupation any more. He fixed me with the look of a dead flounder and said, reproachfully, that it was perhaps not as dangerous as in 1842, when more than 500 fishermen, working from shoals of five-man boats around the Lofoten coasts, were lost in a single storm. Not that dangerous but there are still risks, like the time up near Spitzbergen when they lowered the anchor and one of the crew caught his sleeve in the chain as it unwound and was dragged 30 fathoms down to the sea bed.

"And you know what we did then?" he asked. "We stopped and had a cigarette. And we thought about him. There was nothing else we could do. In the Arctic water he would already have been dead. And then we fished all day. And that night, when we pulled in the anchor, up he came too."

Every visitor should have this kind of introduction to the north of Norway, this reminder that the blade which carved this coastline of mountains, fiords and islands into the most unspoiled corner of Europe, also fashioned its people in flint. No wonder they revere their fish up here. They have paid for them.

Today, one tenth of the population of Norway, more than 400,000 people, lives north of the Arctic Circle. And though there are now other industries — oil and gas

offshore, hydro-electric power and forestry inland and, increasingly, tourism in the Lofoten, it is still fishing and the mighty cod to which the majority owe their living, the relatively warming pump of Gulf Stream which makes life possible.

Inevitably the way to an extended weekend in northern Norway is through Bergen, 550 miles to the south, a perpetually washed, pretty town of white, pink and peppermint claspboard houses, caught between the outstretched fingers of seven fiords, in the shelter of seven pine-wrapped mountains.

Bergen was controlled commercially in the Middle Ages by the Hanseatic League and its hereditary warehouses on Bryggen, the port are still the centre of town. It has always looked outwards for adventure, so it is no coincidence that Bergen looks like a small New England town.

Yet although many voyages began in Bergen — not least those of the Vikings — it is now the tiny Troll-like figure of Edvard Grieg sitting in his Victorian mansion and looking out across the fiord as he composed, which suggests the more appropriate image for this very proper, modern little city. (I would not necessarily recommend it, but those interested in musical shrines can look around Grieg's home, see his Steinway and manuscripts. The only things missing are his gold records.)

To most imaginations the Vikings would have looked more at home further north in the Lofoten. Until recent years, the Lofoten were a group of half a dozen or so separate islands and although the bigger ones are now linked by road bridges and tunnels, this is still the Norway of legend — remote and shimmering in its cleanliness, tissues of snow caught in the mountain crevices even in high summer, and clusters of wooden dolls' houses sitting on stilts which clutch the sharp sides of the fiords.

For our days in the Lofoten we stayed at the tiny fishing village of Mortsund in a renovated *rorbu*, one of the rust-coloured buildings which litter the coast, built as dormitories for the 35,000 fishermen who once trekked here annually for the cod harvest, now redesigned as shelter for the har-

vest of tourists. Situated midway along the archipelago is stark Mortsund, with its characteristic rows of gables from which the cod are hung out and dried before being shipped as a delicacy to Italy (more than half a million square metres of the Lofoten are covered in hanging fish in spring).

More beautiful are the little fishing ports of Reine, Nusfjord and Henningsvaer, where fields of buttercups, bog cotton, harebells and red clover are mirrored in the colours of the cottages and their inevitably attendant boats — because although there are roads up here now, the sea is still often the easiest way to travel.

As no Norwegian will ever tire of telling, the Vikings were the classic examples of that, so it was worth a visit to the Viking museum at Borg, a recreation of the largest chieftain's house ever discovered and built, interestingly enough, exactly like a vast upturned boat. Fittingly, it was by sea that we left the Lofoten, joining the Hurtigruten (coastal steamer) as it made its way north along the coast, between the islands and fiords.

The description "coastal steamer" is misleading. Once the only contact between the Arctic ports, Bergen and the fishing villages in between, now the Hurtigruten consists of a fleet of large luxury cruise ships plying daily up and down the 1,250 mile coast, providing a bus service for locals and a scenic feast for tourists, and calling at a total of 34 ports along the way.

Unfortunately, we did not see any whales on our trip — a disappointment not entirely alleviated when we discovered one carved into steaks on our plates at lunch time. It tasted a bit like braised beef and was not as tender as the seal we had for supper.

Moving ever northwards, the character of every fiord is dictated by almost every passing cloud. In shadow there is a terrible remote bleakness, a cormorant on a jutting rock looking as doom-laden as an albatross, before a smile of sunshine brings an iridescent wash of colour, blues and greens, fringed here and there with strips of white Arctic beach. The coastal steamer



Bergen is a pretty town of white, pink and peppermint claspboard houses set among seven fiords

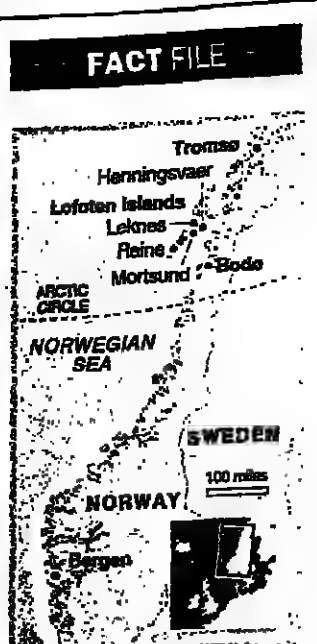
goes all the way around the top of Norway virtually to Russia, but at Tromsø, locally called the Arctic capital, we disembarked. Here, East meets West in its own way, poor rusty Russian ships tied up in the port for repairs which cannot be carried out back home, while the

rich Tromsø pavements are kept clear of winter snow by underground electric heating. These days Norway is enjoying a degree of affluence from offshore oil which would have been unthinkable 25 years ago. One day the oil will inevitably dry up. Little

wonder then that Norwegians fight so hard to protect their fishing rights. In 100 years that may be all they have again. Fish — and an unforgettable coastline.

RAY CONNOLLY

● The author was a guest of Innturvel



FACT FILE

■ Innturvel (01653 628811) offers a seven-day journey, from Gatwick to Bergen, Bodø and the Lofoten Islands, flying with Braathens, from £699 per person sharing (an extra £191 for a single traveller). This includes three nights' accommodation on the coastal steamer (two meals included) in a two-berth cabin, four nights in a *rorbu* in Mortsund on the Lofoten, meals extra, and transfers from ship to airport.

■ The independent traveller can fly from Gatwick to Bergen by Braathens for £190 return. The fare from Newcastle is £164 return, every day except Saturday. Flights from Gatwick to Tromsø or the Lofoten Islands cost £342 return, plus tax. ■ Information on the coastal steamer can be obtained from the Norwegian Coastal Voyage, 15a Berghem Mews, Blythe Road, London W14 0HN (0171 371 4011).

■ Places to see. In Bergen: the Hanseatic Museum on Bryggen, the Trollhaugen, Edvard Grieg's house — concerts on Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays to the summer. In the Lofoten: the stockfish museum at Sand on Flakstad, Nusfjord, Norway's most famous fishing village and a good place for hiking while on Vagan, Henningsvaer is becoming an artistic centre. In Tromsø there is the new Arctic Cathedral, a Lutheran church built like a triangular shard of ice. The most boring place is the planetarium, which is well worth a visit.

■ Things to eat. Fish is in many varieties and cooked in as many ways as you can imagine. Whale meat and seal for those of a less sensitive disposition.

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We find ourselves at this stage of Christmas in the uneasy gap between receiving the V-necked blue one with short sleeves and exchanging it at Marks & Spencer for the round-necked yellow one with long sleeves. Or should we first return the contents of the large cardboard box presented to the seven-year-old (the dear little chap, who announced within five minutes of plugging it in that he needed more RAM, more gigabytes and a much faster modem?)

I know, next year you are going to Honolulu. I was going there this year, but you know how it is. So why not put aside cardboard boxes and videos you'll never watch again and instead do something useful. Enter our latest car competition, or Ka competition. It's a

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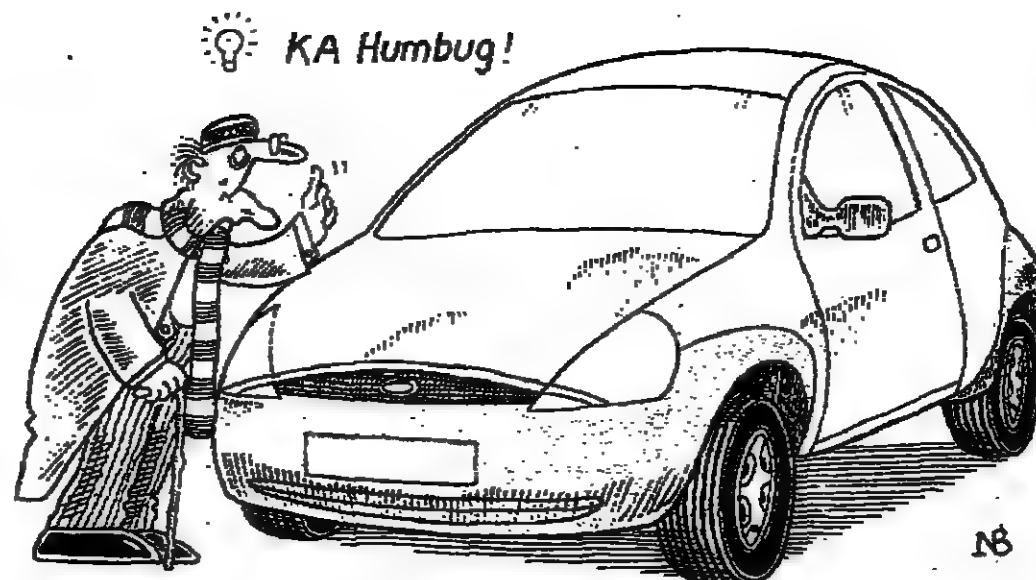
Peter Barnard

family game, if you insist, but Scrabble it ain't. If it was it would only score five for K and one for a. Yes, Ka as in Ford Ka, the neat little motor with the absurd little name. There is no such word as Ka, but then there was no such word as Mando until Ford built

one. The Ka already has a phonetic identity crisis, because Ford pronounces it Ka as in Khama Sutra, some of their customers pronounce it Ka as in Katmandu, while someone in the Ka's bizarre television commercial pronounces it Kar as in, well, car.

So what the Ka urgently needs is a nickname, something we can all pronounce. Which is where you come in. A distinguished panel of judges, or could not be recruited in time, so Alan Copes, editor of Car 96 (or Car 97 as it will become if we all live to see next week), and I will judge your entries and the winner will receive a magnum of champagne, which can be exchanged for a magnum of Tizer if you insist.

The first thing that has to be faced is that the Ka pronounced Kar will inevitably have a nickname longer than its real name.



No harm in that. It's unusual in football (Gazza for Gascoigne) but quite common among royalty (Phil the Greek for Philip). The point is that the Ka is a car which needs extract of alphabet soup added to its impressive list of extras.

For why? Oh come on. You cannot construct a legend out of something that sounds like baby's

first gurgle. When Alec Issigonis named the Mini he did not linger long at the desk of the man who said, I know, let's call it the Mi.

When Messrs Rolls and Royce sat down over lunch in Manchester, they were not overly taxed in rejecting the notion that their first car should be called an Aaaaar-Aaaaar. "Bring the Aaaaar-Aaaaar

round to the front James and quick about it," was a phrase they rightly saw as not so much tripping off the tongue as sticking in the gullet.

If the marketing boys and girls retained at vast expense by Ford were less obsessed with impressing their peers in wine bars, the Ka would not be in need of a nickname, but as an old friend of

mine at the BBC was fond of pointing out: marketing people steal your watch in order to tell you the time.

Well, it's about time sensible folk stole it back. By finding a nickname for the Ka (I am beginning to detect that word, aren't you?) you will be doing Ford an enormous favour, though holding your breath waiting for a letter of thanks and a free trip round the Dagenham factory is not recommended.

Nor is there much time to waste. In fact I would suggest you send in your postcards by first-class mail, for it occurs to me that Ford now owns a Jaguar. Should you be passing my house and hear a shotgun go off, you will know that I have decided to end it all upon discovering that a bunch of nitwits have offered me a pre-launch test-drive of the new Ja.

So quick, before another decent motor gets to be called something that sounds like the triumphal sound emitted by a man executing a karate chop. Send your suggestions (maximum of three per entry) to Name That Ka, Car 97, The Times, 1 Pennington Street, London E1 9XN. Entries addressed to The TT will be used to mop up coffee.

On company manners

Kevin Eason on the survey that highlights the need for our annual driver contest



Lease Plan discovered a host of wrong attitudes

Company car drivers are among the most intolerant and hypocritical on the road, according to a new survey for Lease Plan, Europe's biggest vehicle leasing company.

Lease Plan asked 500 company car drivers for their views on everything from crime to congestion and discovered motorists who travel far and wide but are prepared to break speeding laws to get to their destinations and who see almost every other motorist as a hindrance. Even though they know congestion is bad, they will refuse to take a train instead.

When asked who were Britain's worst drivers, 60 per cent of them labelled "weekend motorists" with another 45 per cent naming old people. After that, anyone with a caravan, lorry or Volvo was on the list of drivers considered the worst.

The sample came from drivers who covered an average 24,527 miles a year, 14,627 of which was on business, which indicates a large number of company motorists wedded to their cars for both work and private time, which accounted for about 40 per cent of their mileage.

The importance attached to a company car, with its lack of worry over running costs, servicing and repairs, was emphasised by the survey. In a list of priorities it ranked second only to a pension scheme, with nearly half of the respondents saying they would not take even a £5,000 rise as a replacement.

However, the importance of the car and the time they spend in it seems to have distorted the company car



Former Transport Minister Steven Norris launches the 1996 Company Car Driver of the Year competition organised by Lease Plan and The Times

drivers' view of the world, if the Lease Plan findings are anything to go by.

Nine out of ten decided that congestion on British motorways was serious, while 76 per cent decided that better trains and public transport was a way to solve the problem — except that when they were asked if they would trade in

their cars for a season ticket on the train, only 26 per cent said they would. Sixty four per cent replied with a definite no.

What company car drivers largely agreed on was a higher speed limit for motorways: almost half wanted it raising to 80mph, while a quarter wanted to be able to travel at 90mph. Even 45 per cent of those who admitted they had been stopped by police in the past said they would travel at 90mph if the motorway was empty.

Men were more likely to be stopped by police, with 52 per cent reporting they have never been questioned compared with 73 per cent of women. Only 16 per cent of the

company drivers admitted to having points on their licence although 5 per cent had more than one offence logged.

Just how accident-prone company car motorists can be is reflected in their reports to insurers. A fifth had made a claim in the past year and 36 per cent in the past five years. Younger drivers were most accident-prone with 23 per cent of motorists in the 17 to 34 age range making a claim in the past 12 months.

Two in five had an accident with another car in the past five years — and women were more likely to have accidents than men, according to the Lease Plan figures. Forty one per cent of women told Lease Plan they had a crash over the period compared with 35 per cent of men. Either company car drivers are very good or everyone else on the road is at fault, for only 23 per cent said the crash was down to them.

What the survey did show was that company drivers need training to cope safely

and comfortably with the long hours and long miles they spend behind the wheel.

Lease Plan, which will sponsor the fourth Company Car Driver of the Year competition with The Times next year, discovered that 64 per cent of drivers had never had training, even though they are, in effect, being asked to operate machinery worth £10,000 and more. Of the third who had been trained, 74 per cent said they definitely benefited, while eight out of ten expected to be offered lower insurance premiums.

However, there are some things that next year's Company Car Driver of the Year contest — which is due to be launched in March — will not be able to offer advice on.

When asked what was the most audacious thing they had done in their car, one in six company car drivers said simply: set. Two even replied that they had sex while they were driving. Quite how they do not explain although we can only assume that adjustable seats and steering wheel would be essential requirements for such activity.

Skills needed for crowded streets

Government should teach older drivers new tricks, says IAM

IT'S HIGH TIME that drivers old and new faced an education programme to help them cope with modern traffic conditions, says the Institute of Advanced Motorists, Alan Copes writes.

While the theory test introduced this year caused some controversy, it has also created an upsurge of interest in how motorists learn to drive. But this still only applies to the newly qualified ones.

"What about the 20-odd million drivers who are finding traffic conditions becoming ever more demanding and for whom even their own 'L' test and the Highway Code are just a distant memory?" asks Michael Robotham, Chairman of the IAM, which in 1996 has been celebrating 40 years of trying to improve standards of driving on Britain's roads.

Mr Robotham said that road safety was based on three E's: engineering, education and enforcement, but of late, education had become the poor relation. "It is time for a major driver-education programme which goes far beyond current drink/drive campaigns. It is clear from the spectacular success of those campaigns just how much can be achieved. Our firm view is that similar effort devoted to a wider range of driver-education subjects

could make a big impact on road safety."

Mr Robotham also had news of a move in the right direction. While for many years the IAM was regarded as an organisation serving worthy middle-aged people, more than 10 per cent of applicants for advanced driving tests through the IAM are now aged under 25. To mark its 40th year, the organisation has launched a series of

campaigns, using modern methods such as CD-Rom courses, to make more young drivers aware of the need for continuing training.

The call for a Government-backed education programme was made to an audience that included John Bowis, the Minister for Road Safety. Robotham pointed out that in 1956, when the IAM was founded, there were only seven million vehicles on the roads, compared with more than 25 million today.

AS WELL AS some 106,000 members who have passed its 90-minute advanced driving test, the IAM also has a commercial arm, which is one of the most active in training company car drivers. According to Transport Research Laboratory figures, advanced motorists are involved in between 50 and 75 per cent fewer accidents than average.

● LONDON
A406 East Finchley. Traffic down to a single lane on the North Circular road between Harley's corner (A1 Falcot Way) and Finchley High Road.
A406 Upper Edmonton. Major roadworks on Angel Road (North Circular Road) over the Lea Valley Viaduct to add lanes, flyovers and tunnels.
A3 Kingston. Northbound lane closure on the Kingston Bypass between Shannon Corner (A298) and Coombe Lane junction (A238) for work on Carers Bridge.
A502 Westminster. Resurfacing work on Victoria Street at the junction with Great Smith Street and Broad Sanctuary.
A3212 Westminster. Bridge Street and Victoria Embankment closed 9pm-5am at weekends in places between Parliament Square and Westminster Bridge.
A224 Saint Mary Cray. Lane closed on Sevenoaks Way for sewer construction work on Leasons Hill.

● SOUTH-EAST
Reading, Berkshire. Restrictions and lane closures for widening work between the Hogarth Roundabout and Burtfield Road.
A329M Reading, Berkshire. One lane closed in both directions from 10am-3pm over the M4 at Junction 10, between Reading and Wokingham.
A27 Brighton. Overnight (10pm-5am) maintenance work on the Brighton Bypass between Hangleton Junction and Ditchling Road Bridge.
A23 Patching, East Sussex. Lane closed on the slip road, with various other local restrictions in place.
M27 Hampshire. Long-term roadworks with a contraflow in place between Southampton East and Fareham.
M25 Surrey. Restrictions and lane closures both ways between Godstone and the A3 as major widening work continues along the 19-mile stretch.
A3 Surrey. Hogs Back (A31), long-term roadworks at Stag Hill flyover. Various restrictions in place.

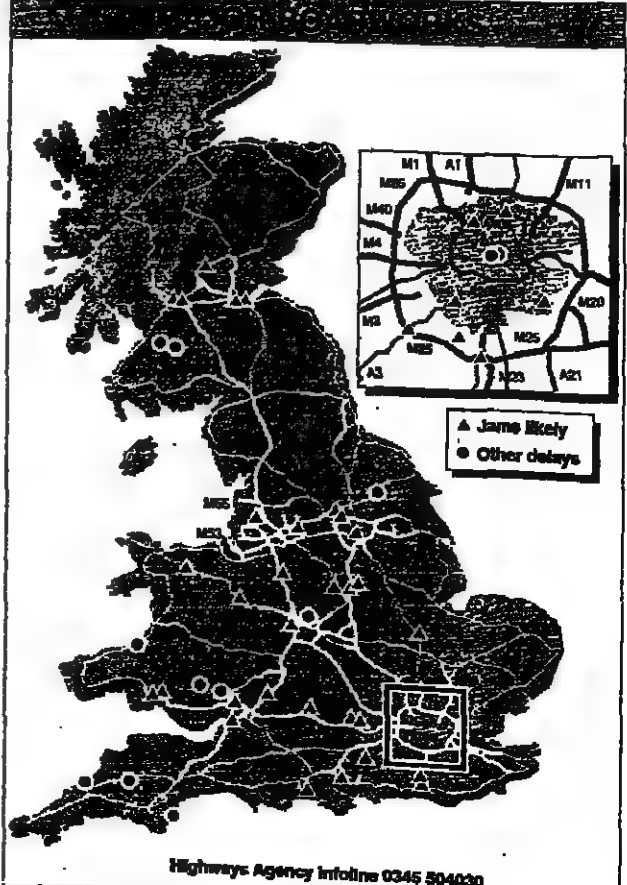
● SOUTH-WEST
A392 Newquay, Cornwall. Temporary lights on Tremper Road.
A3022 Brixham, Devon. Water main work under way between Cudhill Road and Town Hall.
A30 Victoria, between Indian Queens and Bodmin, Cornwall. Temporary lights for resurfacing work.
A35 Barmack Road, Christchurch, Dorset. Lane closed in both directions.

M5 Gloucestershire. Major roadworks with only one lane open at roundabout junction with A419.
M5 Gloucestershire. Contraflow across Avonmouth Bridge with a 50mph limit.
Swindon, Wiltshire. Construction work on Fleming Way with restrictions between the Magic Roundabout and Whalebridge.

● MIDLANDS AND EAST ANGLIA
A1 Aconbury Hills, Cambridgeshire. Reduced to one lane northbound at the A14.
A6 Lockington, Leicestershire. Contraflow from just north of M1 J24 to Sawley Island, with no right turn into Dorrington Lane.
A52 near Grantham, Nottinghamshire. Temporary lights over Nottingham Road bridge. Diversions via B1174 and A507.
A500 Staffordshire. Contraflow on D-road between Talke and Stoke-on-Trent as roadworks continue.

● NORTH
A62 Chadderton, Greater Manchester. M66 construction work on Oldham Road at junction with Hollinwood Avenue.
A59 Much Hoole, Lancashire. Resurfacing work on Liverpool Road causing major hold-ups heading to and from Preston.
M1 West Yorkshire. Major roadworks continue around the Leeds junction with lane and speed restrictions. Delays on M1, M621 and Dewsbury Road.

● WALES
A482 Aberaeron, Ceredigion. Upper Aberaeron Bridge on South Road closed for reconstruction work. Diversions via Panteg Road and the A487.
A470 north of Cefn Coed, Merthyr Tydfil. Temporary lights on Brecon road for major works. 40mph on A485 at Cefn Coed with temp lights on Aberdare Road.
M4 Monmouthshire. Lane closures between the Magor and Newport junctions.
M4 Swanssea. Carriageway reduced to one lane in both directions for roadworks between Swanssea and Llanelli.
A472 Pontypool, Torfaen. Contraflow between Pontypool and Heron roundabout.
● SCOTLAND
M8 Edinburgh. Junction 2 Newbridge Spur (M9). Major roadworks, with lane closures on the roundabout.
A9 Greenloaning, Perth & Kinross. Contraflow four miles east of Dunkeld.
A898 Eskdale Bridge, Renfrewshire. Bridge only open to car and light vehicles.



AUTOFAX by David Long and Les Evans

THE WORLD'S FIRST MOTOR RACE TOOK PLACE OUTSIDE PARIS IN 1887 AND WAS WON BY THE SOLE ENRANT, THE COMPTE DE DION IN HIS STEAM-POWERED QUADROCELLE.

THE VOLVO NAME DERIVES FROM THE LATIN FOR "I ROLL"

THE LONGEST WAS THE 1947 GRAN PREMIO DEL NORDO RUN FROM BUENOS AIRES TO LIMA — AND BACK AGAIN.

ALBERTO ASCARI LOST THE 1955 MONACO GRAND PRIX AFTER HE ACCIDENTALLY DROPPED HIS FERRARI IN THE HARBOUR.

Hunters and their opponents are increasingly locked in a 4x4 off-road pursuit. Simon Hacker reports

Making tracks to save the deer

The scene is familiar from a thousand Christmas cards: the sturrier of the pink-clad huntsmen in full cry across a snowy landscape. But the reality today is one of conflict, and the clash between hunters and their opponents is as likely to be reflected in their choice of vehicles as it is in their views.

The horse is now for the brave and hardy few. The majority of hunt supporters prefer the comforts of a four-wheel drive to an out-of-control thoroughbred. So if you want to follow a 1990s hunt, pursue the scent of diesel.

But not all who follow are followers. On the Devon and Somerset border, deep in the Exe valley and the surrounding dense forest, a well-scripted battle is under way. The semantics are of moth and claw, but the real means of combat between the huntsmen and their long-term adversaries, the League Against Cruel Sports, now lie in the vocabulary of beefy badging.

In hunting's pink corner are Land Rover, Mitsubishi and even the odd Jeep, while the more politically red team is made up by Suzuki, Daihatsu and Toyota. The League's 4x4 stable for hunt monitoring is crucial to its strategy. From its off-road fleet it stays as close to the heart of the chase as possible, recording all the information it can and, crucially, waiting to witness any trespass on to League land.

Thanks to the growing strength of its membership, the anti-hunt pressure group has not only bought the vehicles but has purchased 2,000 acres of land, peppering the ancient hunting map with a grape-shot of no-go areas. Most of these, says its head of West Country Operations, Graham Sirl, centre around St Nicholas Priory, near Dulverton, Somerset.

"The sanctuaries are scattered throughout prime hunting country and are often life-savers for a deer on the run — but they'd be of limited protection without our off-roads," he says.

At the first tally-ho, the League looks to have a good head start. The hounds move off in search of their quarry, but the three-car team simply keeps moving and watching along the network of lanes.

From the passenger seat of the Suzuki Vitara J1X, Sirl's assistant Jill Neild wields a camcorder, occasionally jumping out on to the verge and shooting a quick reel. In turn, she is filmed by a Jeep-driving lady parked close behind. But she seems unconcerned — being at the right spot quickly is crucial to maintain media interest.

Last season, images of a trespassing huntswoman responding to a call of nature more fundamental than hunting itself were flashed around the world — all thanks to the easy camera angle afforded by a lofty 4x4.

"If you follow the hunt in a standard saloon, you're unlikely to catch very much at all," Sirl explains.

Gory pictures of a kill are often declined by news editors, but recorded proof of trespass can land a huntmaster in court and lead to a possible injunction. But here's the catch: the League's team are well-known to the hunt's large body of car-bound followers.

Indeed most of them seem to be on speaking terms with the supporters. And while it may seem unfair to suggest that mobile followers would deliberately risk rural road rage by impeding the League's progress along the narrow lanes, mysterious 4x4 traffic jams are a frequent occurrence. If they were just passing through, Home Counties holidaymakers could be easily forgiven for thinking themselves on some muddy version of the M25.

"I can drive 100 miles in the course of a day's hunt," says Kevin Hill, the League's sanctuaries officer and keen Daihatsu Fourtrak man. "But you can end up stuck in a lane with nowhere to go."

Which is why all the vehicles are kitted out with a Philips radio link. "We never stay together," says Sirl, "but we're in constant contact and use radio communication to pinpoint our positions because it's more difficult to listen in on than a standard CB."

League staff catalogue and report events which they say prove them to be as much a target as the stag they protect. "We have had a lot of petty theft from the vehicles if we have to leave them in a hurry, that's why the League badges we use are magnetic, so they can be quickly

removed and make the vehicles less noticeable," says Hill. Despite the radio commentary and the ebb and flow of followers' cars, it's hard to know what's going on in the motorised age of hunting. But by lunchtime, it becomes clear that the red deer — and the red team — have clinched victory. The pink team looked confident, but failed to score.

But in a local farmer's field, the Devon and Somerset Staghounds seem cheery enough as they box their horses and return to their off-roads. Some even smile and bid good-day to the League observers as they drive away.



Graham Sirl and Kevin Hill of the League Against Cruel Sports with their stable of vehicles: "If you follow the hunt in a standard saloon, you're unlikely to catch much at all"

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seem cheery enough as they box their horses and return to their off-roads. Some even smile and bid good-day to the League observers as they drive away.

Janet George, spokeswoman for the British Field Sports Society hunts with the Wheatland Fox Hounds, deep in the heart of Shropshire. Bramble, a trusty hunting hack, is her chief off-road companion, but the real workhorse is a 1984 petrol-driven, short wheel-

base Land Rover, in regulation "faded green".

"It's what we call 'deep and holding' country — perhaps because if you stray six inches off the road, you're in deep and maybe kept on hold for a long time. You need both a car and a horse that can plug mud and keep going."

When horse rider and car are not hitched in happy transit, the Land Rover serves as an excellent observation vehicle. "It's not an essential

for following the hounds by car, but a sturdy four wheel drive helps — you can park well clear of the road and entrances and you get a much better view of the hounds."

Back in Somerset, the end of a hunt often marks feeding time for the 100-strong herd at the League's St Nicholas sanctuary — another job for the 4x4. The League hauls a special mix of trace elements and vitamins to the deer with the help of a Toyota Hilux. Sanctuary worker

Kevin Dillon says a tough off-roader is crucial come tea-time.

"They are wild animals and it's important not to get too close. If they get accustomed to human contact it could be to their danger. So we need to move in with the feed and be away quickly. A four-wheel drive pick-up is just the job."

At a safe distance, the deer munch indifferently. After all, hunting these days is something that mostly happens on the road.



Mitsubishi Shogun, Jeep Cherokee and Land Rover Discovery: "You need a car and a horse that can keep going"



Daihatsu Fourtrak, Suzuki Vitara and Toyota Hilux: "We use radio communication to pinpoint our positions"

Riders and drivers on the road to disaster

Brian Pedley on the dangers when two forms of horse power collide

Three years ago, Eleanor Hill achieved her lifetime's ambition of owning a horse. Now, aged 24, and after more than 14 years in the saddle, she vows never to ride again. One midsummer evening last year, on a quiet B-road near Warwick, a collision with a car left her prized horse, Terrapin, so appallingly injured that he had to be shot where he lay. With his back and both rear legs broken, the animal died in unspeakable agony.

Eleanor, who was thrown 15 feet through the air, still has nightmares. "It was bad enough going through all of that once, let alone every time you shut your eyes," she says. "My mother, who was riding with me, saw everything. She got covered in my horse's blood. I was her darling daughter and she thought I was dead. For her, it was horrific — but in a totally different way."

Every year, says the British Horse Society, at least 3,000 riders are involved in acci-

dents involving motor vehicles, with most occurring on sleepy rural roads. The consequences can be catastrophic.

Eleanor Hill was so deeply traumatised that she now dreads the open road and has had to abandon her career as a Press and Sponsorship Assistant with the British Show Jumping Association. "I could no longer actually cope with going to the shows because it was too painful. I have only recently stopped having counselling. I won't even walk my dog on the roads now."

When a car collides with a fully-grown adult horse, it strikes an awesome half a ton or more of bone and muscle. "I even get motorists phoning me after they have been involved in a horse-related accident," says the BHS's Director of Safety, Lesley Billingham. "It's not only the horse and rider that are traumatised, but equally the driver because they have been confronted with the reality of it."

This year, the BHS joined forces with the Department of



Some motorists resent the presence of horse riders on the roads, but, while they would prefer not to use them, they often must to reach bridledways

Transport for a campaign to persuade drivers to show more consideration towards horses being ridden and driven on the roads. Some 300,000 copies of a leaflet, *Horse Sense*, are being distributed. And the BHS is about to mark its Golden Jubilee with an even larger campaign, Road Safety 2000, to promote its own road safety test among Britain's three million riders.

For the moment, motorists are Billingham's principal target. Their sheer lack of understanding is the major problem, she says. "My own feedback is that drivers very often perceive riders as people with too much leisure time and probably too much money... and that they shouldn't be on the road at all. "But a lot of people are riding because it's their job. Any horses in work or in

competition need to be exercised. Even if they are leisure riders, what motorists forget is that they've probably been working hard all day. "Motorists and riders both share a responsibility to be aware of each other's needs," Billingham argues. "The leaflet has recently been addressed from the motorist's point of view. There is guidance in the Highway

Code, but it's aimed more at the rider. Riders prefer not to use the roads. Let's make that clear. But they have to use them in order to get to off-road facilities such as bridledways. "The fact that a horse is being ridden doesn't change his natural instincts. He's unpredictable. He's strong and easily frightened. The only way to meet a horse is to slow right down and to give a

very wide clearance before passing. "If the rider requests you to stop or slow down, there's usually a very good reason. Either they can hear or see something up ahead that the driver cannot, or they can sense an impending reaction from their horse. "For motorists, the manoeuvres of riders are wrongly perceived as illogical or eccen-

tric. Why, for example, do horses always seem to be ridden in double file? "Someone may be training the inside horse to traffic and accompanying it with an older, steadier animal," explains Billingham. "Or the rider may be a novice or a young person — which is another good reason for having them on the inside. And if it's a big group of horses we usually advise to ride double file because it's easier for drivers to pass a shorter group than a long string."

Riders also tend to keep to the left, even when turning right. Again, Billingham and the BHS recommend this as precisely the sort of practice that saves lives. "A rider never sensibly puts his horse between two flows of traffic because the animal is easily panicked and there is no escape route."

Last year, a Kent-based company launched a sonic device for drivers to place in their vehicles to warn animals of their approach. The Animal Warning Alert was tried by Billingham and BHS members and found wanting.

"We passed horses and dogs on roads, but they didn't seem to react in any way. There's no way you can tell it isn't working because it's inaudible to humans. And I think, with a rider, you don't want your horse moving away if there's nowhere for it to go."

For the BHS, there can be no substitute for "horse sense". For one-time rider, Eleanor Hill, it will be for others to benefit from the campaign. "I'll never ride again... never," she insists. "I couldn't ever risk seeing another horse in pain."

The leaflet *Horse Sense* is produced by the Department of Transport in association with the British Horse Society, British Equestrian Centre, Stoneleigh Park, Kenilworth, Warwickshire CV3 9LR. Tel: 01203 08606.

As television car advertising moves into overdrive, Ian Morton learns how the message for the same wheels has to be carefully geared to national attitudes

Why Papa and Nicole don't go to France



Antipodean Bryan Brown sings the praises of Citroën and an Englishman takes his Rover 200 to New York, images in a market that has never been more creative, daring... or expensive. Now budget control is on the agenda

Handbag-sized hurricane Ruby Wax wields her mercurial talent in the cause of the Vauxhall Corsa. Laconic antipodean actor Bryan Brown pragmatises the virtues of Citroën. Peugeot's hero scoops a small girl from the path of a thundering truck. Father and daughter pursue their sunlit saga on behalf of Renault. An Englishman takes his Rover 200 to New York. Dynamic images whirl around the new Ford Ka.

And so on. No prime time commercial TV programme is complete without its car ad. Projections have never been more creative, daring... or expensive. According to the latest available figures, major car manufacturers invested a record £185 million in TV advertising in the UK last year, yet this year they had spent more than half that figure — £98m — by the end of the first quarter. It was the same story across the Continent. Last year the total TV ad spend in the ten main markets by the top 15 carmakers was nearly £1.108m; the first quarter total this year was £602m.

How long can it go on? As increasing competition forces the motor industry to look continually for financially beneficial shortcuts from shared research, development and manufacturing, the need for budget control is on the agenda for marketing departments too. A single commercial like that Englishman in New York costs £750,000.

So could new efficiencies be asked of a glamorous and apparently free-spending medium which most practitioners regard as an art form in its own right, and which is often at the mercy of matters beyond the control of those bean-counters — weather, quality of light, artistic temperament, illness? (For British audiences the most recent ads have undoubtedly been the Papa and Nicole series. Conceived to launch the Renault Clio five years ago, it has been the "best repaid and most liked" campaign in Britain for three years, and interest in the characters has generated free newspaper and magazine editorial worth £1m.

And the campaign has done its job supremely well. For three years the Clio has made the UK top ten



Dramatic: Peugeot's hero figure saves a little girl from a truck

best-seller list, has been the biggest-selling imported range in a market where 60 per cent of new registrations are imports, and has been instrumental in doubling Renault's UK market share.

But the success of this copybook campaign also illustrates the greatest problem facing the TV men — the issue of nationalism. While the British adore Papa and Nicole and the series was also successful in markets from Holland to Chile, it was never acceptable in France.

The world of Papa and Nicole is France seen through British eyes — a quaint Peter Mayle idyll, a sun-drenched vine-clad France, says Douglas Thursty-Pelham, of Renault UK's London-based agency Publicis. "It is not the romantic France which the French know. You cannot exploit nationalism on its home ground by using national stereotypes."

Even after choosing the Papa and Nicole theme for English consumption, Publicis was at pains to avoid "gratuitous Frenchness," says Thursty-Pelham. "Frenchness only works if it validates the product. Berets and baguettes might be useful French symbols, but they do not validate the car. You have to say — this car will enhance your quality of life... and it's French. Nationality is one of the great universals of

advertising and is something you can export, but only if it validates the car's qualities."

So out went Frenchmen playing boules because they added nothing to product communication. Out went French dialogue because it would distance the audience from the message. Out went English dialogue with a French accent because it jarred.

The current Renault signature line "Voitures a Vivre" was dropped because most English would not understand it — though some signatures do work, points out Thursty-Pelham, and "Vorsprung durch Technik" worked for Audi in Britain "because it phonetically communicates strength and technology although nobody knows exactly what it means."

French TV advertising for Clio produced by a Paris agency used locations well away from France — New York, the Middle East, Moscow. In the Moscow ad a crusty Russian general in a gloomy limousine remarked on a Clio with a pretty passenger. Gruff, sardonic Russian dialogue between the general and his young driver followed. "With subtitles the ad could be run in any country," says Thursty-Pelham. "It was an example of getting round the language problem by emphasising it. We shall be seeing much more of that."

For Renault internationally the

TV AD SPEND

UK total '95 (1st quarter '96)
Renault: £7.59m (£8.58m).
Peugeot: £15.27m (£10.9m).
Citroën: £15.8m (£7.7m).
VW: £15.3m (£6.78m).
Fiat: £7.66m (£5.79m).
Rover: £16.6m (£6.3m).
Vauxhall: £27.9m (£9.54m).
Ford: £26.5m (£8.3m).
BMW: £4.92m (£1.25m).
Mercedes: £2.19m (£1.7m).
Volvo: £9.39m (£1.7m).
Honda: £4.67m (£4.38m).
Mazda: £1.61m (n/a).
Nissan: £15.9m (£8.48m).
Toyota: £2.19m (£3.28m).
Others: (£12.7m (n/a)).
Source: Optimedia, Paris



Whacky: mercurial Ruby waxes lyrical about the Vauxhall Corsa

puts across the generic values of the small car very well. But this is 'borrowed interest'. It means nothing in itself.

Sex is difficult. What you can show in Scandinavia you can't get away with in Turkey. Legislation is a minefield of course. What is allowable in one country is banned in another. How you use children in advertising is a case in point.

"Nationality remains at the core of the subject. By and large the car consumer is pretty ignorant about cars, but he knows about marquis of cars, and the one thing he does know is where a car comes from. Therefore he accepts certain of its attributes because of its nationality, and makes automatic points of differentiation."

Whether you exploit this in advertising depends on whether nationality is relevant to what the product delivers. Going big on the Malaysian heritage of Proton would add nothing because being Malaysian signifies nothing to the consumer in terms of cars. Spanishness adds nothing to a car made in Spain because that country produces purely European cars.

"But everyone knows that established nationality informs the audience about the product. When you say your car is German, everyone knows that you imply Teutonic efficiency and robustness. Saying your car is French implies flair, individuality, a special quality of life. Saying your car is Italian implies performance and design in the pure sense where form follows function. A Swedish car brings with it an automatic awareness of safety. A British car implies tradition."

"In the UK, France and Italy, the audiences prefer images. In Spain there is a slightly old-fashioned attitude which inclines to the macho approach and likes the success implications of upper-medium and executive cars. Scandinavia has a preoccupation with safety. Italians like to see their cars going fast. In France and England we are more comfortable with stories into which the car fits — a softer sell, with the car as part of lifestyle."



Pastiche: the Nissan Almera is sold with a Professionals touch

most satisfactory TV campaign has been the ad for the Renault 19 — another Publicis effort — in which the car seduced a handsome young priest from his calling. An unlikely scenario maybe, but it avoided the pitfalls of nationality by centring on universally recognised symbols: a priest to personify virtue, a car to represent temptation. Dialogue was unnecessary.

"It was conceived to a central European strategy," says Thursty-Pelham. "We produced it for British television, but it went to 19 other

countries very successfully. Religion is thin ice in advertising, but this ad showed the dangers of prejudice. I thought the Catholic countries would not like it, but one of those that most adored it was Italy, where it was filmed."

"What was important was that for the first time we had started to think about Europe-wide needs. We contacted Renault agencies in other markets offering filming to satisfy their specific needs. They told us, we filmed, and they shared the production costs."

If you don't like my voice, you get the Big Ben Banjo Band

No Christmas holiday period would be complete without Sir Harry Secombe. The veteran entertainer, who celebrates 50 years in showbusiness in 1997, is recreating his role in *Pickwick* at the Apollo Theatre, Oxford.

Sir Harry, a popular presenter on Sunday evening TV programmes such as *Highway Songs of Praise*, made his West End debut at the Windmill Theatre in October 1947 shortly after he had been demobbed. He worked alongside Tony Hancock and came into contact with Peter Sellers, Spike Milligan and Michael Bentine.

Their development of a new form of radio comedy led to the *Goon Show*. They became part of the nation's heritage and were adored by millions, including the Prince of Wales.

How did you first learn to drive?

In 1940 when I was stationed with the army in Usk. I

demolished three concrete bollards in the market square. I was in a three-ton truck. The officer in charge passed me anyway. He made only one proviso: "Any time you are taking a vehicle out let me know and I'll stay in the barracks."

What was your first car?

A pre-war Humber saloon. I bought it from a member of the show I was appearing in at Torquay in 1950. I paid £40, which was £30 too much. If I drove over 25mph the windows wound down. I had to pay £5 to have it towed away.

What car do you drive now and why?

I drive two: a Mercedes 500 SEL and a Jeep Cherokee. But never at the same time.

Do you like driving?

Around the countryside near my home, but not the journeys up to town.

STEERING COLUMN
Andrew Pierce
talks to Sir
Harry Secombe

What is your most hated car?

The Ferrari two-door F50. Because, at £329,000, I can never afford it.

What is your dream car?

I have already had it. A scarlet Thunderbird drop-head coupe with white leather upholstery which I bought new in 1956. Unfortunately, it was a left-hand drive and not very roomy, but the burble of its exhaust was sweet to the ear. I still dream about it.

What is your worst habit in the car?

Singing along with the music

on the radio. My voice is a safety hazard at close quarters unless the windows are open.

What infuriates you most about other drivers?

When they drive about 25mph and then speed up when you try to overtake.

If you were Secretary of State for Transport, what is the first thing you would do?

Restrict the times heavy lorries can come thundering into inner London.

What is the most unusual thing you have done in your car?

When filming in New South Wales, Australia in mid-summer I decided to drive to the outback for a family picnic. We found a lovely spot and I laid out the food on a tablecloth on the ground. Within seconds we were surrounded by hordes of flies and insects. It was the only time I

have had a picnic inside a car, with the windows wound-up, and an outside temperature of more than 100 degrees... and every biscuit a Garibaldi.

Have you ever had points on your licence?

About 30 years ago I was caught in a speed trap. It was a sunny day and I was singing along with *Housewives' Choice* on the radio. Suddenly a helmeted and bicycle-clipped constable nicked me for doing 40mph in a 30mph zone. After he had taken down my particulars, he asked for an autograph for his mother.

What do you listen to in the car?

I never miss the hourly news bulletins on Radio 2. Sometimes I play Viennese waltzes if my wife is with me because they are her favourites. If I have any recalcitrant passengers, I threaten them with the Big Ben Banjo Band cassette. It always works.



Sir Harry and his Mercedes 500 SEL: still dreaming of the scarlet drop-head Thunderbird

Trucker with his own fan club

Kevin Eason on the neat fleet of Edward Stobart, the best-loved and smartest haulier in Britain

They are like a green army on the move, forming a convoy that stretches from the north to the south of England.

As Britain settled back into the festive season, there was no rest for the regiment of drivers of Britain's best-known lorries. For Eddie Stobart is Britain's most famous haulage firm and the man who founded the business — Edward Stobart — Britain's undisputed king of the road.

He is the only trucker with his own 15,000-strong fan club, the only one who has a multi-million pound merchandising operation selling everything from hats to stickers, mugs to model trucks.

In fact, Eddie Stobart trucks are probably the only ones that most motorists who cruise the motorways could identify readily, thanks to their dramatic green, red and gold livery with the name Stobart picked out boldly along the sides. Even the drivers are different, the smartest on the roads at the insistence of the boss, who goes by the name Edward, not Eddie. They wear pale green shirts and jackets, even a tie at all times; slackening the tie or taking it off is a punishable offence within the Stobart organisation.

And the company is one of the fastest growing in the country. Edward started with a couple of trucks and now has nearer a thousand, making his company the biggest independent private haulage business in the country.

Without Stobart trucks, the supermarket shelves would have been empty of cans of beans, lagers and soft drinks this Christmas. Edward's trucks have shifted thousands of loads in the weeks up to Christmas in a unique — and most profitable — operation.

Stobart trucks pick up the empty cans from the manufacturers, then transfer them to Stobart warehouses for storage, then to the drinks manufacturers for filling and then on to the supermarkets. Edward's operation even puts the widgets in tens of thousands of cans. The business requires military precision and must not go wrong, otherwise the trucks end up in the wrong part of the country on the wrong day, or they set off empty



Edward Stobart with one of the model truck merchandising spin-offs from his smartly liveried thousand-vehicle haulage fleet. He started off in business as a schoolboy, selling sticks for firewood

when they should have a full load. A team of operators controls the lorries on a £250,000 computer system at a high-technology nerve centre at the Stobart headquarters in Carlisle, shifting lorries from around two dozen locations across Britain, and from manufacturers to supermarkets.

It is a business on a scale which could hardly be further from Edward's humble beginnings 26 years ago. Edward's father, the Eddie in the title, was a struggling agricultural merchant when Edward, the second Stobart child, was born in 1954. While the other

kids went off to Saturday morning cinema, the ten-year-old Edward Stobart was in business, collecting and selling firewood for three shillings a bag. Within two years, he was selling 50 bags a week and earning more than most of his father's drivers.

By 14, he had left school, a small boy with a stammer, labelled an academic failure by frustrated teachers. He joined the family business but was soon itching to go his own way, eventually splitting the haulage firm from the agricultural supplies business started by his father.

His work-rate became legendary, not just working in the office, but cleaning the lorries and driving loads himself.

As he queued with his truck for a consignment of cans at the huge Metal Box company, he helped other drivers lash down their loads. They thought it was a remarkable act of philanthropy — actually he wanted them on their way so he could load up and get in more runs than them.

The work was 24 hours-a-day, seven days-a-week: Edward grabbing a few hours of sleep on the

shelf of a filing cabinet in the office in between dashing out to hose down a dirty truck or volunteering to pick up a late load at night.

The punishing pace paid off though, and lucrative contracts — the first from Metal Box — came pouring in. Soon he had 20 trucks, then 50, then 100 and on and on until the green and gold livery became the best-known on the roads.

A few inquisitive letters, asking who ran these clean, smart vehicles turned into a torrent, demanding the start of a fan club: the Eddie Spotters. At motorway stops,

Stobart drivers are immediately recognisable in their uniforms and are often asked for autographs. The trucks stand out in a crowd — and if they don't, the drivers know how to attract attention — for they are taught to drive into a depot slowly and turn the vehicle so everyone can read the name.

Each lorry has a woman's name emblazoned on the nose, and now fans write in to ask for a truck to be named after their wives or girlfriends, daughters or mothers — then they spend the next few months trying to spot it again.

Their devotion is a remarkable

tribute to a man whose meteoric success withstood the recession and now threatens to outstrip the boom as Eddie Stobart Ltd expands inexorably year after year.

But Edward's business philosophy is as simple now as it was when he was a ten-year-old boy and bundling up firewood. "We never turn any customer away and we always do it at the right price," he says. "We are always smart, tidy — the best at everything. We have the smartest drivers and the smartest trucks and we do our job well, which is why people notice us and why we are a success."

CARMART: YOUR GUIDE TO WHAT'S NEW AND USED ON THE FORECOURTS

Formula One freighter

■ IT WAS appropriate, just before Christmas, to follow a star, *Stuart Birch* writes. But this one took me to Bishop's Cleeve, not Bethlehem, and it was on the bonnet of a Mercedes-Benz, not hovering in the heavens.

But if it had been necessary to carry gold, frankincense and myrrh, I am sure the car would have coped admirably with vast amounts of the stuff: it is the latest version of the Mercedes C-class Estate, the 2.5-litre turbodiesel C250.

Mercedes-Benz diesel-engined cars are famous the world over for being the automotive equivalent of Me-thuselah: they may not last, like him, for 969 years, but they are likely to go on and on in terms of time and miles. An example with more than 100,000 on the clock is no great rarity and one that has endured a decade of hard use is a stripping.

Without a turbocharger, though, they tend to be a bit lacking in fizz. The 1500hp turbodiesel C-class, you will be pleased to know, has plenty. In fact it is positively quick.

We were sent one with a five-speed automatic gearbox which suits it — with one

ROADTEST

C250 Estate Turbodiesel
Engine: 2497cc, five cylinder, 20-valve, 150bhp.
Performance: Top speed 125mph; 0-62mph, 10.4 seconds.
Fuel economy: (Automatic) urban, 25.7 mpg; out of town, 44.1mpg.
Equipment: ABS, driver and passenger airbags, electric sunroof, infra-red central locking.
Insurance: Group 13.
Price: £27,430 (add £1,450 for automatic).

proviso: the multi-valve, 2.5-litre engine has loads of torque, which generally matches well the electronic automatic transmission and the car will storm past slower vehicles safely and surely. It also cruises quietly and easily.

That proviso concerns the first couple of seconds of its standing-start acceleration. Entering a busy London roundabout often calls for

careful judgment and quick initial acceleration.

Flooring the accelerator pedal of the Mercedes does not produce the snappy movement which I want in that situation and which others, closing rapidly, quite reasonably expect.

But just as surprise is turning to mild concern, the revs rise sufficiently for the whole act to come together and the Mercedes powers away from the pack.

Questioned about this initial dilatoriness, Mercedes thought it was because the test car had covered few miles and that it would improve as the mileage increased. I wonder.

That aside, the turbodiesel engine is almost sporty in its performance. Despite its hesitant start it will get to 60mph in about 10.3 seconds and top speed is around 125mph, says the company.

Of course, one of the main points of having a diesel engine is its good fuel consumption. That C-class estate sees a mid-30s average and 40 will be achieved by many owners.

The chassis of the C-class is a fine example of how to do things correctly. Ride is firm



The turbodiesel's van-like 53.3 cu ft capacity combines with a wide-opening tailgate

but comfortable, handling competent but not as sporty as the 3-series Touring.

Unlike the Audi A4 Avant and BMW 3-series Touring, which do not pretend to be estate cars in the "freighter" sense, the C-class has a good load-carrying capability but still manages to look stylish. The load area offers 16.4 cu ft of space with the divided rear seats in place, or 53.3 cu ft with

them folded, the seat cushion removed and loaded to the roof. That is quite van-like capacity.

The tailgate opens very wide, and loading the car is easy. Small items, fly about, though, because there is no retaining net on the floor. Relatively few manufacturers fit one, yet its cost-effectiveness is unquestionable. A retractable dog-guard is standard.

The car feels quite big, and certainly does not have the neat compactness of the BMW and Audi.

Build and engineering quality are of the highest order and there is particular focus on safety. There are three equipment levels to choose from. The test car was in Elegance form, which is quite luxurious but you pay extra for a radio — and for air conditioning.

Swede with staying power

■ THE SAAB 900, with its stolid Swedish looks, oozes professional respectability and common sense, writes *Vaughan Freeman*. It has also established an image as a status symbol, reports *CAP Black Book*.

Even though the car's relative scarcity on the forecourt makes it a bit pricey, and service and spares prices are higher than some rivals', the 1989-95 Saab 900 is much sought after. This is because the Saab 900 will run for at least 200,000 miles without turning a hair. It is supremely strong and well built, and

FORECOURT

will go on and on if properly cared for.

Because of its longevity, the 900 is often targeted by clockers so watch for worn-smooth gear knobs and steering wheels, indicating usage greater than the odometer claims.

Watch out for whistling turbos, accident damage and chattering turbo blades.

■ TOYOTA'S SUPRA is the cheap go-fast car. In true Japanese fashion, build quality is excellent and long-

lived. Even early models (the car sold in various guises from 1986 to 1993) are worth a look if cared for.

Once wickedly but unjustly described as a "second-division footballer's car", the Supra gives huge amounts of mph per pound.

Supra's always depreciate quickly; best buy is the 1991 3-reg turbo liftback, and expect to pay around £10,500 for a car with average mileage.

Avoid any Supra that does not come with a service history. The Supra can belt must be changed every 36,000 miles.

SPARE PARTS

■ POWER-HUNGRY motor-sports fans can expect to have their appetites sated when the biggest collection of Formula One cars to be seen outside a Grand Prix competes at Goodwood Park in June, writes *Eve Ann Prentice*.

The gathering, which is part of the Goodwood Festival of Speed on June 20-22, will mark the 30th anniversary of Jim Clark's victory at Zandvoort, when the Ford Cosworth V8 FI engine which powered his Lotus scored its first win.

This year's festival celebrates "decades of power", and will pay tribute to several

other anniversaries, including Ferrari's 50th birthday. Many previously unseen Ferrari models will be at Goodwood, from early Grand Prix cars to the latest Ferrari 333SP IMSA chassis from America.

■ NEXT YEAR is also a double anniversary for the Mille Miglia, because the first was held in 1927 and the last in 1957. The festival will include an exhibition of the rarest and most significant Mille Miglia machinery.

John Surtees and his championship motorcycle display, air displays, supercars and rally cars are among the other attractions planned by the festival organisers.

■ SOARING sales of mopeds and small commuter motorcycles have prompted Honda to create a special network of dealers.

Sales of 50cc mopeds increased by 38 per cent this year and Honda plans to open about 20 new centres in the new year. The new dealerships will offer sales on the

doorstep for the new breed of commuter-bike-buyers.

"They are buying scooters and commuters because of their low cost and supreme convenience. They won't travel 30 miles to an existing dealer," says Dave Hancock, Honda's UK sales and marketing manager.

Looking ahead, I can see little change

Q Here we are at the end of another year. There are another million cars on the road and we're all stuck in jams for even longer. Where's it all going to end?

A I think you should be addressing your question to a politician, or perhaps a politician. Personally, I find the jam always ends just about half an hour after you are expected at your destination.

Q I'm glad you can take it so calmly, doctor. All I hear is stories about mammoth hold-ups, roads cracking up under the strain and people getting injured in road rage attacks. It sounds like the end of motoring as we know it, don't you agree?

A Now, now, try to calm down a bit. Yes, the roads are getting more crowded and I sympathise with your frustration, but I don't think motoring has, well, er, come to the end of the road yet. If you'll pardon my little joke.

Q Of course, you always were a bit of a smooth talker. But what do you really think is going to happen to the motor industry in 1997?

A Well we doctors like to start with a bit of the patient's history. The late 1980s were a pretty terrible time for the motor industry in this country. Now things are picking up; if 1995 was the year of the people-mover then 1996 just has to be year of the sports car: Jaguar XK 8, MGF, Lotus Elise, Porsche Boxster, BMW Z3, Mercedes Benz SLK, Ferrari F50, Alfa Romeo GTV, Fiat Coupé, Renault Spider. Name any maker and they've produced some sexy two-seater this year.

Q Have you spotted any other trends? What should we be watching for?

A All right, I'll play the doctor's predictions for 1997: Watch out for a rash of mini MPVs like Renault's Megane Scenic, Fiat's Multipla and Citroën's Berlingo concept; watch out for more gadgets to help you plan routes and avoid jams, like TrafficMaster, and watch out for gas-powered cars — it could prove to be a big growth area.

DR DASHBOARD

Q Sure, there'll always be a market for "boys' toys", for those with more money than sense. But what does that prove?

A Well, firstly a lot of these new sports cars are affordable, costing no more than a middle-range saloon. Secondly, history suggests that lots of sports cars is a good sign. The last time there were so many on offer was in the late 1950s and 1960s when there was a real burst of innovation in car design.

Q Nice theory, but where does that leave the rest of us who just want an ordinary small car to get from A to B?

A The other big growth area is in the mini class. Almost every maker has brought out a new small car in the past few years and even those who've never made a mini before, like Mercedes, are planning one in the very near future. These minis are a long way from the old concept of a cheap and cheerful basic car. Most of them offer lots of gadgets and automatic minis are increasingly popular.

Q All right, I'll play the doctor's predictions for 1997: Watch out for a rash of mini MPVs like Renault's Megane Scenic, Fiat's Multipla and Citroën's Berlingo concept; watch out for more gadgets to help you plan routes and avoid jams, like TrafficMaster, and watch out for gas-powered cars — it could prove to be a big growth area.

